Oberammergau
and its Passion Play 1930

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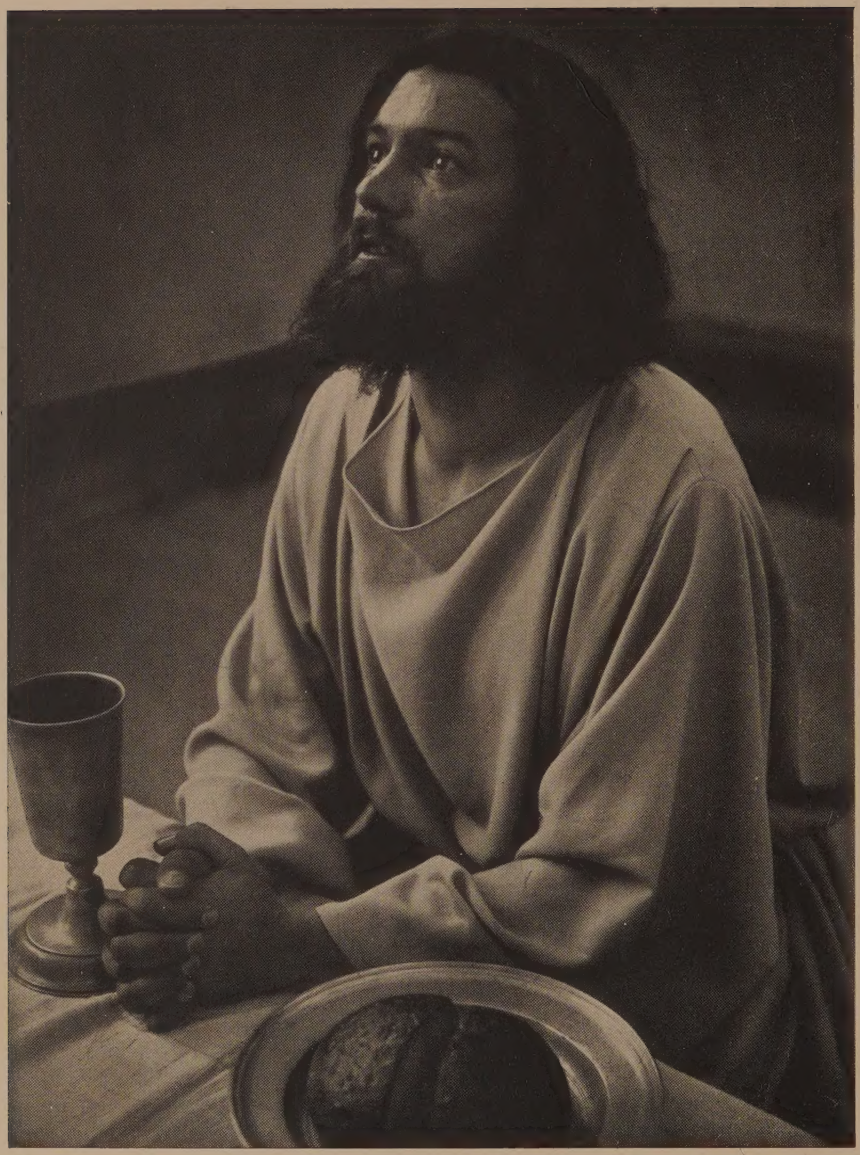

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OBERAMMERGAU

and its Passion-Play

by Hermine Diemer, née von Hillern

Newly revised

by Dr. Franz X. Bogenrieder

Curate at Oberammergau

A review of the history of Oberammergau and its passion-plays from their origin up to the present time, including a description of the country of Ammergau as well as the popular customs and habits of its inhabitants, and containing many illustrations

Fourth Edition

Translated by Walter F. Kloeck,
formerly of the American Consulate General,
Munich, Germany

Munich 1930

Carl Aug. Seyfried & Comp. (Carl Schnell und Söhne) Printers and Publishers

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Printed in Germany

792.1
H65

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Prologue

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(Act VII., Scene 4: "Betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?")

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Jesus vor Herodes

Jesus before Herod (Act XII., Scene 1.)

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Jesus fällt unter dem Kreuz

Jesus falls beneath the cross (Act XIV., Scene 4.)

Preface.

"OBERAMMERGAU and its Passion-Plays" is appearing for the fourth time in 1930. Hermine Diemer, née von Hillern, wrote the book for the play-year of 1900. Anyone writing on Oberammergau since has quoted this detailed work.

The editions of 1910 and 1922 were condensed to a large extent. The authoress herself was still able to do this work. In 1924 Hermine Diemer died.

The revision of the new edition was entrusted to the editor by the family of the authoress. As far as possible I followed the outlines of the previous editions. Aside of that I may claim for myself what Hermine Diemer says in the preface of the third edition: "I had to alter a lot as it was required by the ever-changing times and by the history of humanity itself."

It is hoped that the book will again become a dear souvenir to many who have witnessed the Oberammergau passion-play of 1930.

Oberammergau, on Passion-Sunday, 1930.

Dr. Franz X. Bogenrieder,
Curate.

Oberammergau — Looking towards Kofel.

A Pilgrimage

Many thousands of people set forth for the country of the Ammer this summer. They come from all over the world. And most of them come as pilgrims. People they are who still believe, and who, by looking at their representation, want to live through the sufferings of our Lord. People who have lost their faith in the world and who want to find it again in the play of the simple-minded folk, sanctified as it is by the centuries.

Of course, it is no pilgrimage as in days of old, on foot or in a waggon, or on bad roads.

Today the electric railway runs into the village, and for the automobiles, comfortable highways have been built. Persons coming from Augsburg need not go over that dreaded mountain of Echelsbach any longer; since last year a splendid bold bridge connects the steep banks of the Ammer. And the magnificent mountain-road that winds itself up on Mount Kien, from Oberau in the Loisach-Valley to the height of the pass before Ettal, has been widened and its continuation to Oberammergau has been newly arranged and made distinct. He, who today looks down from that road into the deep valley of the Gießenbach, will hardly be ready to believe that a lot of traffic once went over that neck-breaking highway. And yet, that was the road on which already the Romans were marching to their post "ad coveliacas", and on which a thousand years later the merchants' heavily laden waggons dragged along coming from the south and headed for Augsburg. Up to 1888 this road was the only connection between the Loisach and Ammer Valleys. In those times, the peasants of Oberau made good money by helping out people with additional horses.

Unsafe and terrible, however, was that road during the times of the passion-play, when

Old Ettal road.

hundreds of carriages, one behind the other and all in one trail, had to go up the steep mountain and, last but not least, go down again on the other side. We read about that in descriptions of journeys made around the middle of the past century. There was no thought of turning out of the track. As the carriages happened to fall into line, thus they had to go up one side and down the other. How often did it happen that on the way down some light buggy, could not be held back any longer, that some vehicle or other broke out of the row and caused a general stampede. For then the other horses too, could not be bridled any longer; ladies used to scream, the drivers swore, and in a fury the runaway horse would dash down into the valley, — horse, carriage, and driver to be found later on, lying in a heap. Many a "Marterl", many a little cross by the roadside, tells of the fatal accidents that happened on this road until recently. Just before the new road intersects the old one, there is a black obelisk; it was erected in memory of a terrible accident that happened here when the statues of the crucifixion-group were being transported to Oberammergau and had to pass that steep mountain on their way.

In spite of all its dangers, and in spite of all the terrible events that took place there, the old road also has a charm of its own. It is the breath of centuries gone by, the spell of tradition, that lingers about. When the merchant, returning from some far-off country, had climbed the wellknown steep road, — when he had overcome the last

View of a portion of the new Ettal mountain road.

height that lay between him and his home, — he would give a yell, so as to salute the forests of his native country, the rustle of which he had longed for, many a dreary day. However steep it may be, for a pedestrian the old road is more agreeable, even today, because it is much shorter. A good walker will easily do it in half an hour.

tine Abbey of *Ettal* with its minster of "Our Lady". Huge and mighty the cupola raises its head into the blue of the sky, almost as majestic, as the surrounding mountains themselves.

Ettal was founded on the 18th of April by Emperor Lewis the Bavarian. Returning from his unfortunate journey to Rome and coming

The Ettal mountain road.

At the top, where the road has gone over the mountain, a picture of rare beauty presents itself to the eye. Through the wide valley of Graswang a youth-like, blue-eyed river runs out into the plains: the Ammer. Down to its waters comes Mount Kofel, the sign of Oberammergau, overhanging in a fearful precipice and adjoined by the lonely and quiet Ammer Mountains. To the left of us there are the spurs of Notkarspitze with the "Ochsensitz" in their midst, whereas to the right, below "Ettaler Mandl", the ragged Laber Dolomites are towering up to the sky.

Embedded in this wonderful mountain-country, large and weighty, is the Benedic-

from the Werdenfels Country then belonging to the abbot of Freising, he there set foot again on his own ground. The monastery was founded "in ye praise of our Lorde God and in ye honour of Our Lady".

To the abbey with its 22 monks and its abbot Friedrich der Heinersreuther, the Emperor added a noble house for 13 knights and their wives, and for 6 widows of knights.

The abbey-church, that was consecrated together with the monastery only in 1370 by Bishop Paul of Freising, was constructed as a central building on a regular twelve-angled ground-plan. "In ye centre of ye minster" there was the altar leaning against

a column, the miraculous image being enshrined in it. The sacred statue "Mary with the Child" is said to be the work of an Italian sculptor by the name of *Pisano;* the emperor had brought it personally from the south. Revival and baroque styles have somewhat altered the interior of the church;

Josef *Schmutzer,* builder, and his son-in-law Johann Georg Yblhör, plasterer, were the men who in the course of the following years gave the church its present appearance. The twelve-angled ground-plan was maintained, the middle-column was removed, and on the top of the old walls the gigantic cupola

Ettal.

outwardly, however, the old twelve-angled building with its supporters and its tent-like roof remained untouched up to the 18th century. In 1710 the ground-stones were laid for a new fore-front of the church and for a new convent-building, a choir being added at the same time to the central building. The Munich architect Enrico *Zuccali* was the builder. In 1726 the new choir was consecrated by the Freising Prince-Bishop, the Lord of Ecker. But already in 1744 the choir, the library, and the abbey were destroyed by fire.

was put instead of the former tent-like roof, the same cupola that we now admire. At a height of 40 meters it ends in a lantern, including which the interior reaches a total height of 50.7 meters; as seen from the outside, the church's measures including the cross run up to 65.4 meters. On entering the church there is nothing to remind us of the Gothic central building, neither in the building itself, nor in its furnishings. We get the impression of being in a magnificent rococo-church. Stucco-work, fresco-paintings, altars, confession-chairs, emporiums, pulpit, all speak

of the same artistic taste. The cupola is covered by a gigantic painting, the work of a painter of Reute in Tyrol, Joh. Jakob Zeiler; to some of his smaller works and especially to the cupola-painting of his country-man Martin Knoller, which latter adorns the choir-

Convent church of Ettal.

it represents a glorification of the order of the Benedictines in all its branches (1752). As regards artistic value, Zeiler, with this immense and impressive painting, ranks second room. The painting on the high-altar showing St. Mary's ascension is also by Knoller. In the painting of the flat cupola (1769) he continued to evolve that idea. Heaven is in

gay readiness to receive its queen. The costly marble frame of the high-altar was made by Josef Lindner of Salzburg, master stone-cutter. Roman *Boos,* a Munich sculptor, made the reliefs at both sides of the high-altar. Towards the end of the 18th century the miraculous image was transferred from the altar in the middle of the nave to the altar of the choir; there it is today, enshrined in the latter's marble tabernacle. For the six side-altars the church is indebted to Johann Baptist Straub, a Munich sculptor to the court; they rank among his best works (1757—1761). The structure — frame altars without architecture—as well as the figures are masterpieces of Bavarian rococo. (They are, from the back to the right front: St. Stephen and St. Lawrence; St. Leonard and St. Magnus; king David and Daniel the Prophet; to the left: St. Barbara and St. Agatha; St. Ulric and St. Rupert; and the holy disciples Paul and Matthew.) The altar-paintings are by Knoller (altars of St. Catherine, St. Sebastian, and of the holy relatives), by Zeiler (altar of St. Corbinian), by Felix Anton Scheffler (altar of St. Benedict), and by Franz Georg Herrmann (altar of the Holy Disciples); they were created in the years between 1756 and 1763, and in 1790 resp.

The Madonna of Ettal.

The Holy Image.

Organ-structure (Simon Gantner), confession-chairs and pews (unknown master), and pulpit (Straub), all are in harmony with the rythm of the altars, the whole of the interior being a splendid continuation of Yblhör's stucco-work.

Around the church there is a corridor, usually called the "Cross-Walk"; it dates back to the time when the church was built, and probably even before the great fire of 1744 it served as a burial-place for the abbots, and the inmates of the convent. (Among others P. Ferdinand Rosner lies buried in the church; he is the man who changed and worked out the text of the Oberammergau passion-play for the play-years from 1750 to 1780). In the portal, that leads from the round corridor to the church, there is a well-preserved tympan above the straight arch of the door-opening; it dates back to the first half of the 14th century and represents the crucified Saviour,

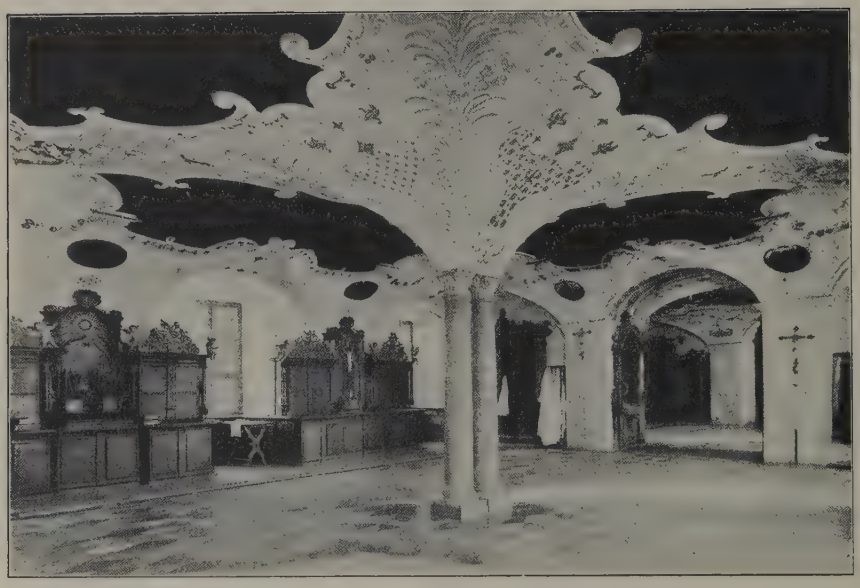
Mary and John, and the figures of the endowers, namely Lewis the Bavarian with his wife Margaret of Holland. Probably it is so well preserved because at the times when Gothic was disliked it was covered with a thick sheet of mortar.

A particular sight of Ettal church is its vestry which, as far as outlines and furnishings are concerned, belongs to the most beautiful vestries that may be found in Bavarian convent-churches. The fresco-paintings on the vaulted ceilings are by Joh. Jakob Zeiler; the smaller oil-paintings in the middle-pieces of the closets are by Johann Joseph Zwink (1726), the father of the Oberammergau "Lüftlmaler" ("Air-Painter") Franz Zwink. The most precious are the fine veneerings in the doors of the closets. Roman Boos again is the maker of the two fountains that are in the passage between the east- and west-rooms of the vestry; they show original representations of Jonah and young Tobiah.

Above the vestry, on the first floor, there is the chapter-room and the choir-hall, with ceiling-pieces by Zeiler. The library is on the second floor.

Like the rest of the Bavarian monasteries Ettal fell a victim to the "Secularisation" of 1803. The fact that it had been founded by a German Emperor and Bavarian Duke, — that as an academy of noblemen, it had for times immemorable educated them to become competent officials of the state — was not sufficient to save it. A part of the convent-buildings was pulled down, another part was sold. The church was turned over to the state and made a parish-church; the vestry went over into private hands. In 1829 the church was thatched with copper as it was decaying considerably. In 1854 the finishing touch was put to the northern tower; from 1894 to 1901 the façade was built anew; and in 1906 the southern tower got its actual appearance.

Benedict Altar in Ettal Church.



Convent church in Ettal. The Sacristy.

In 1900 the sons of St. Benedict were permitted to return to their monastery. And with them the spirit of the holy founder of their order came back too: the "ora", the solemn anthem of the choir, and the "labora", the call to cooperation in the national tasks of civilization. In 1906 the priorate was raised to the dignity of an abbey, the prior of that time, P. Prior Willibald Wolfsteiner, being consecrated the first abbot (ad multos annos!). Under his reign numerous new convent-buildings and a humanist college with a modern boarding school were erected. The wide convent-yard, into which we step on leaving the church, is filled with the gay bustle of youth; here is a place where youngsters may grow up in wholesome fresh air and participating in all the benefits of country-life.

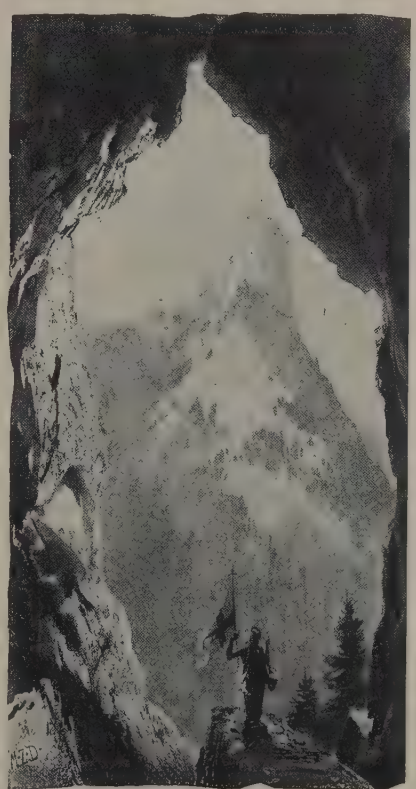
Before we pass on, we pay a little visit to the old monastery-inn that has stood by the roadside for so many centuries. We relish a drink of the delicious beer that is brewed in the convent-brewery. A few years ago the inn was enlarged by adding to it a modern hotel-building. Its name is simply "Lewis the Bavarian" ("Ludwig der Bayer") in memory of the imperial founder of 1330.

The Passion-Village and its Surroundings

The Kofel.

We are coming from Ettal. At the quarry before "Kapellenwand" ("Chapel's Wall") we halt in front of "Bärenloch" ("The Bear's Den"), a cave of many fables. It lies across the road, to the right. A figure of the Saviour is standing in its opening, and seems to give a greeting of welcome to the wanderer. From this spot we get the first glimpse of the village. To be precise, it is only the tower of the church that we see and "Hillern-schlösschen" (the little Hillern-Castle) garding the entrance like a gate-keeper. Wilhelmine von Hillern, the famous authoress, had it built on Bichl Hill after the passion-play of 1880. Down below, near the road, there is the house of her son-in-law, Professor Michael Zeno Diemer. Still closer to the village we pass "Hänsel- und Gretelheim", a communal carving school years ago, a home for soldiers' orphans later on, and nowadays a children's home belonging to the City of Munich.

Now long "Aussergasse" begins. Today the last house in Aussergasse is the Forest-Office, just before the church. After the middle of the 18th century it was built by Josef Daser, a native of Oberammergau, a curate and Apostolic Prothonotary who bequeathed it to Ettal Monastery. First it was the residence of the Ettal judge, but after the secularisation of the monasteries in 1803 it was put to the disposal of Herkulan



View of the Kofel from the *Bärenloch*.

Schwaiger, the last prior of Rottenbuch. In more recent times its western front was decorated with fresco-paintings (hunting scenes) by Hartmann, a Munich artist; on the eastern side, however, four pretty works by the "Lüftlmaler" (The four Seasons) have been fairly well preserved until today. Opposite the Forest-Office there is the "Weiße Lamm" Inn which is being run by a descendant of Dedler, the composer of the passion-music.

"Aussergasse" in Oberammergau.

Soldiers' Memorial in Oberammergau.

In front of us we see the parish-church with the village-cemetery. Many great and good people lie buried there. Grand, like the deeds of the fallen brave, the soldiers' memorial arises from the rows of the tombstones; it was erected by the community of Oberammergau in 1924, in memory of those that fell in battle. Design and execution are the work of Johann Georg Lang, the stage-manager in 1922 and 1930. Towards the street it shows St. Michael as leader of the German people, on the other side, towards the cemetery, it shows the resurrection of Christ, the hope of the dead.

Not far from the soldiers' memorial the grave of Jos. Alois *Daisenberger* is situated, a priest and clerical councillor who is responsible for the passion-text in its form of today, a modification of the original P. Ottmar Weiß text. The remarkable busto of this priest was hewn out by a Munich sculptor, Professor Otto Lang, who died

in 1929. Being a native of Oberammergau, he himself had been sitting at the feet of this grand old humanitarian when he was a boy. We also notice the grave and the monument of Wilhelmine von Hillern, the authoress whose novel "Am Kreuz" ("On the Cross") has been read and still is being read a great deal. Furthermore we find the tomb of Prior Herkulan Schwaiger of Rot-

The parish-church was built by Josef Schmutzer of Wessobrunn, builder, in the years from 1736 to 1742. As to construction, stucco-work, and furnishings, it may be considered to figure among the best country-churches in early rococo-style. The altars which give the interior so finished an appearance, were furnished by Franz Xaver Schmädl, a Weilheim sculptor. Most of them

Oberammergau. Interior of the church with Organ.

tenbuch during whose reign the secularisation of the Bavarian monasteries took place.

The part of the cemetery that lies north of the church, is occupied by the family-graves of the Diemers, Langs, and others, all of them people, whose lives were closely connected with the history of the village and its passion. There are also the graves of the two last curates, Josef Schröder, and Heimbucher, and finally the monument "erected by friends and pupils in memory of Rochus Dedler, our unforgettable teacher."

families, who in former times were rich and influential. The main altar with its more than lifesized figures of St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Josef, and St. Joachim attracts our attention first. We admire the numerous angels and angelic children that are grouped around it, and then we pass over to the Trinity and Cross-Altars. The latter's cross itself dates back to the end of the 16th century. On the mensa, the altar-table, we notice the body of St. Amandus, the holy martyr; it once was given as a present to this church by Gottlieb Eyrl, a Dominican friar and

are gifts from Oberammergau merchant-native of Oberammergau residing at Rome. The ceiling-pieces show the following: the "Confessio", that is, the altar that was erected on the grave of the apostle-princes in St. Peter's Church at Rome (above the organ); leave-taking, martyrdom, and glorification in heaven of the apostle-princes (in the cupola); the four great teachers of the church (in the gores); and the three divine virtues. In the choir: glorification of the rosary-queen's intercessive power (in the cupola) and the four evangelists (in the gores). All these paintings are by Matthäus *Günter*, a painter who was very famous at his time, and who was the Director of the Augsburg Academy of Arts. He also painted the pictures on the high-altar (The Rosary Queen) and on St. Anne's Altar (The Holy Kindred). The picture on St. Anton's Altar, however, is by Joh. Jakob Zeiler, another wellknown painter. Franz Zwink, the "Lüftlmaler" (the "Air-Painter"), painted the biblical scenes from the old and new Testaments that are to be found on the ballustrades of the emporiums. (1787). Gorgeous confession-chairs in the choir, a pulpit showing a relief of the Good Shepherd, and an organ built in 1759 complete the furnishings of the church. The organ-work itself was given to the church in 1890 by some of Oberammergau's English friends. 30 years ago the church was still in possession of that famous crib of the 18th century which is now property of Georg Lang, Director of the Passion-Play. It is now exhibited in a special room of Mr. Lang's house and may be visited all the year round. There were also two Venetian crystal-chandeliers and a large number of good figures from the old church; they are, however, no longer in this church now.

The house of the Langs, Wall fresco by Zwink.

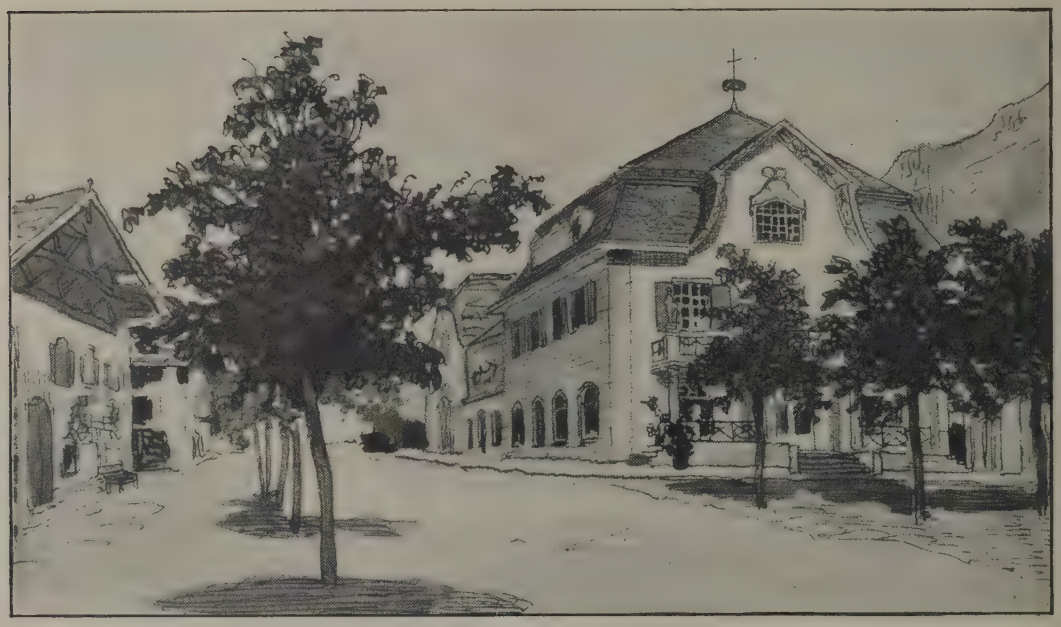
The biggest part of the village lies north of the church. We are struck by the pretty paintings on some of the houses. Formerly most of the Oberammergau homes were decked with fresco-paintings. With the exception of some new paintings by Gries, they are the works of Franz Zwink, the

so-called "Lüftlmaler" ("The Air-Painter") who was Martin Knoller's highly talented colour-grinder and assistant, at the time when the latter was busy painting the interior of Ettal Church. He got his nickname of "Lüftlmaler" from the tender and hazy manner in which he used to paint the "air", is remarkable how well Zwink's fresco-paintings preserved their fresh appearance in the course of these 160 years, for it was in 1769 that he painted his first Oberammergau picture. By his technique and composition, Zwink made himself one of the most important façade-painters of those

The "Pilate-House", Wall fresco by Zwink.

i. e. the skies. He was a skilful and quick worker and there are many anecdotes that tend to illustrate his speed at painting. The saying goes that he once met a peasant's wife who was about to make butter; he promised her to paint a likeness of the Holy Virgin on her house before she could get through with the churning if she agreed to let him have the butter as a reward; the good woman assented and — lo! before she had finished, the picture was there. It times. Among the best he painted at Oberammergau, the fresco-paintings on the house of the Langs in Lower Village Street are to be mentioned; this house has been called "Pilate-House" on account of the large fresco on the garden-side showing "Jesus before Pilate". The architectural paintings on its front-side, however, are just as good in their way and may truly be called masterpieces too. Besides this Pilate-House, fresco-paintings by Zwink may be seen on the

following buildings: House Nr. 171: "The Martyrdom of St. Johannes Nepomuk". House Nr. 139: "St. Johannes Nepomuk". House Nr. 123: "St. Augustinus and St. Anton of Padua". House Nr. 126: "The Holy Trinity"; "St. Anne" (three times herself). House Nr. 129: "Mary, Refuge of the Sinners"; "St. Josef"; "The Office of the Keys is conferred on St. Peter". On the Forest-



The Museum of the Furnishers Georg Lang sel. Erben.

Office: "The four Seasons". On the so-called Klepper-House: "The Flight to Egypt" and "St. Martin". On the former "Gasthof zum Bayerischen Löwen" Inn, now the home of Alois Gerold, shoemaker; "St. Mary's Coronation"; "The Handing-Over of the Rosary to St. Dominic"; "The Sending-Away of Hagar"; "The Flight to Egypt"; "The Healing of old Tobiah". The pictures on the houses of Bierling-Stöck and "Weißes Lamm" were restaured to a great extent in the course of the last few years. Other works by Zwink are to be found at Unterammergau, Kohlgrub, Garmisch (also in the parish-church there), Partenkirchen, and even in Mittenwald although the latter community had a well-renowned façade-painter itself, in the person of one Franz Karner. Some portraits and various religious pictures, most of them in private hands by now, show that the "Lüftlmaler" was competent at oil-painting too. Franz Zwink was not 44 years of age yet, when he died on the 29th of May, 1792. "A painter that must not be estimated lightly has ceased to paint" it says in the Death-Register of the Parish of Oberammergau. His great-grandson, Johannes Zwink, acted as Judas in the passion-play of 1910, the latter's daughter being the Mary of that same year.

Aside of the other Oberammergau sights, such as the parish-church, Zwink's fresco-paintings, and the new passion-theatre (which latter will be treated in one of the following chapters) is above all the *Museum* that is worthy of our attention. It was dedicated to Oberammergau art and artcraft by Kom-

merzienrat Guido *Láng*, a furnisher, and it is today in the possession of his family. Being a man of great historical understanding, he was just in time to collect what had been left of the old Oberammergau works; thus his collection gives an instructive survey of the historical development of all branches of typical Oberammergau home-industry, such as wood-carving, painting on the backside of glass, embossing in wax, and making toys. A visit to this unique museum is to be highly recommended, as well as a visit to the afore-mentioned historical crib in the house of Georg Lang, the stage-manager of the play. Very interesting too is the government trade-school for wood-carvers which has a special show-room where the works of the pupils are sold. In this school the young folks are trained in the old art of crucifix-carving, their individual abilities being developed so as to make them independent artists who are apt to follow their own ideas later on. Many of them become sculptors in the true sense of the word. Well equipped hostelries tend to make the tourist's stay at Oberammergau an exceptionally agreeable one. An up-to-date hospital offers careful treatment and recovery to anyone obliged to call upon its services.

A strangely shaped mountain in the proximate surroundings of Oberammergau attracts our attention: the Kofel. Up to 500 meters it shoots straight from the valley, having steep and dangerous sides all round. Mt. Kofel was already known to the Romans who named their post in the Ammer Country "ad coveliacas", in its honour. In the middle ages, on the first of May each year, the espousals of the betrothed used to be celebrated up there accompanied by music and dancing. In 1580 Pabst, a Nuremberg merchant, presented the mountain with the colossal wooden figure of a knight. The latter was hauled up, and erected on May 30th of that same year. Later on, however, that figure was replaced by a big wooden cross, and that one, again was replaced by another one, every tenth or fifteenth year, provided it was not destroyed by storm or lightning before. Kofel must have presented a splendid spectacle in 1807 when it was all aflame. For ten days the fire was raging, burning logs being hurled into the valley like rockets. Even today its perfid sides occasionally claim the lives of tourists and, although there is a fairly good path leading up to the summit now, no inexperienced climber should venture to go without a guide. Not every fall ends so well as that of a young Englishman who went up a few years ago. Without the necessary equipment and without knowing his way he began to climb all by himself. Suddenly his foot slipped and he fell down over the precipice. He was caught, however, by a merciful dwarf-pine that stuck out of the rocks, and so he hung there swinging in the air between heaven and earth. In his plight he remembered a Bavarian word that he once had heard or read somewhere: "Yuhoo! Yuhoo!" he kept on yelling for hours and hours. Farmers who were working in the fields heard him shout, but they did not pay any attention to him since that yell expresses joy. Finally he tried it in English: "Help!" he cried out — and now the peasants understood. Immediately they came to his rescue and freed him from his terrible situation.

The summit of Mt. Kofel may be reached in about an hour and a half. It affords a splendid view on a charming landscape, especially on Oberammergau itself that lies stretched out below in the valley, almost vertically underneath our feet. At "Kofelachsel" (the Kofel's "Shoulder"), there are some caves that have been nicknamed "Kofel's Kitchen". This is where the mysterious "Kofel-Woman" hides, a witch that since

Crucifixion-Group.

times immemorable supplies Oberammergau with children whom she kidnaps again if they be found in the streets after sundown.

Coming down the north side of Kofel on "Marxersteig" path we soon reach the Crucifixion-Group, the royal present that Lewis II. gave to the people of Oberammergau after their passion-plays of 1870/71. The colossal group has been hewn out of Kehlheim marble by Professor Halbig; it was set up in summer 1875. The king himself chose the text for the inscription: "To the People of Oberammergau, devoted to art and true to the ways of their fathers". The moment, too, in the dying of Christ that was to be represented by the artist was decided upon by the king himself: "Mother, behold thine son! Son, behold thine mother!" The most human moment in all the dying of the Divine. The Saviour's mouth is still half open, having spoken these words. Weeping John lifts his clasped hands and Mary, Mater dolorosa, veils her face.

A wonderful panorama may be enjoyed from this spot. Across the village with its church and its theatre we look from the Ester Mountains beyond Loisach Valley to Mt. Laber with its Starnberg Cabin, to the big and small Aufackers, and to Mt. Hörndle with its variety of pointed tops in the north-east. Far away in the distance we see the foothills of the Alps and beyond them the wide plains. A picture of indescribable beauty!

At the opposite side of the village, 20 minutes from it, the chapel of St. Gregor looks out of an old forest that stretches out on both banks of wild Laine River. St. Gregor, a miracle-worker, is particulary venerated as a helper in times of flood. Certainly Oberammergau is in need of such a patron; for again and again the Laine tries to break down the protecting dikes, flooding the village as it was wont to do for centuries.

Oberammergau. Drawn in 1820 by Jos. Ant. Lang, altar-painter, Oberammergau.

History of the Village of Oberammergau

Anyone coming to Oberammergau with the idea, that he is about to see a peasant-village like any other in Upper Bavaria, will be greatly surprised at finding out that this is not the case. As soon as he gets acquainted with local conditions there, he cannot fail to notice the difference between the population of Oberammergau, and that of other mountain-villages. The foreigner, of course, will always be inclined to take the Ammergauer for the type of the Bavarian peasant in general, and on his return home he will praise, besides the passion-play, "Bavarian peasant-life" as a whole. Even people who are better informed, often make the mistake of taking the Ammergauers for primitive rustic characters, ascribing the certain refinement they come across in dealing with them, to influences from without. "They are peasants who profited by an increased tourist-traffic resulting from improved railway-conditions, and who, on account of that could not help accumulating a certain wealth". And everybody, who has seen the passion-

play and has spent a few Marks in the quiet village, takes pleasure in feeling that he has become a furtherer of civilisation for the village and its surroundings.

The history of Oberammergau, however, teaches a different lesson. The last decades have given nothing to the Oberammergauers that they did not already possess; on the contrary, they took away more than they gave. It may be true that tourist-traffic contributed a lot to improve the financial situation of these people; to their souls and minds, however, it worked out to be harmful rather than beneficial. The Ammergauers are an old civilised people, who, in the seclusion of their mountains may look back upon the history of a thousand years. It is of no importance to them whether more or fewer travellers pass by.

Ammergau was already known to the Romans. From the old Roman road leading from the south via Mittenwald and Partenkirchen to the Loisach Valley and hence to Lake Ammer and Augsburg an auxiliary road branched off at Oberau leading to Schongau and Altenstadt in the Ammer Country. Roman names, findings, and inscriptions clearly prove that what is today Oberammergau once was a Roman post.

Around 750, a priest by the name of Thasso, and some companions of his came to the Ammer Gau as the first missionaries of that territory. But it is probable, that the inhabitants had already become acquainted with Christianity through some of the Roman soldiers who were garrisoned there. Tradition indicates that in the earliest times the Ammer Gau belonged to the parish of Waltenhofen whence Thasso and his friends had come.

Towards the end of the 9th century — all embittered and at variance with the world — an old guelph named Ethiko appeared in the Ammer Gau. With twelve of his faithful armour-bearers he lived on his estate of Ambrigo, defying the vassal-spirit to which not only the world but also some of his own proud clan had begun to surrender. He and his companions are said to have been buried in the Ammer Gau but nobody knows where their graves are. Some believe that the name of Ettal is derived from "Ethico-Tal" (meaning Ethiko's Valley) and that the villa of the grudging old guelph had been situated there as well as the monastery he is said to have founded, and which later on was transferred to Altomünster. Emperor Lewis the Bavarian's grandmother was a guelph of Ethiko's clan, and so it seems possible that this emperor founded his monastery at Ettal on the same spot, in memory of his ancestor.

For two hundred years the Ammer Gau remained in the immediate possession of the guelphs, until Guelph VII, Ethiko's last descendant, sold his family-estates to Emperor Barbarossa in order to pay off the debts he had incurred by riotous living. Among them were his possessions in the Ammer Gau which country thus became property of the Hohenstaufens. The latter later on bestowed it upon Otto von Wittelsbach together with the duchy of Bavaria.

The year of 1330 marked the beginning of good times for the Ammergauers. Lewis the Bavarian provided well for his new monastery at Ettal, and aside of mountains, pastures, and hunting-grounds he also gave it his hereditary estates in the Ammer Gau. The sun of imperial grace was shining down on the Ammergauers. They were given privileges and liberties that had to be considered rare exceptions in those times. It was stated that they were entitled "to build and to bequeathe on these our estates in the Ammer Gau, which we gave as a bailiwick to the new monastery of Ettal, in honour of Our Dear Lady". In later times too the emperor frequently came to the Ammer Gau to watch the progress of his foundation and

even in spring 1347, the year in which he died, he is said to have stayed there for a while. Perhaps it was the lovely miraculous image of Ettal that was before his soul when dying he exclaimed: "Mary, sweetest Lady until my parting-hour". That was during a hunt near Fürstenfeldbruck.

The foundation of Ettal entailed a lively traffic on the old commercial road leading from Italy to Augsburg. The people of the Ammer Gau understood the times well. Serving as guides to the traders who came from the south they accompanied them as far as Schongau; vice versa they led up to Partenkirchen those that were coming from Augsburg. Already in 1332 Lewis the Bavarian gave "the burghers and peasants of the Ammer Gau the right to lodge all traders, and to store all merchandise passing through their village, just as they do in Murnau". The teamsters formed a guild of their own, the "Union Waggoners". In 1420 the dukes Wilhelm and Albrecht still extended the rights of the Ammergauers: "Since the road goes there and nowhere else, nobody except those of the Ammer Gau shall have the right to help with horse the merchants passing by". Even today, a certain hill near the village is called "Warbichl" because the "w a r(e)s" used to be stored there until they could be forwarded on. The Laine at that spot is called "Esellaine" ("Donkeys' Laine") as the sumpter-mules would be watered there. The old road too passed by "Warbichl" and led towards Kappelberg, following a direction different from that of the actual highway to Unter-Ammergau.

Commercial activity brought money and wealth to the village. And that was necessary, for the villagers would have been unable to live on the products of the rough soil, especially as the population had increased by the immigration of foreign serfs and tradespeople.

Another source of industry of the Ammergauers was woodcarving. From Rothenbuch Monastery, where it is sure to have been practised already in the 12th century, this art probably spread at the same time to Berchtesgaden and Oberammergau. When, at the beginning of the 16th century Andreas Althammer, a Suabian, wrote his history of Ettal, he already mentioned the Ammergauers as famous sculptors. It is not astonishing therefore that in the course of the centuries Oberammergau gave the world many a well-renowned artist, such as Franz F e i c h t m a y r, a stucco-worker who exercised his art at Augsburg around 1700, and his two sons, F r a n z X a v e r and J o h a n n M i c h a e l. Franz Xaver Feichtmayr's talents are manifested in the Munich Theatinerkirche whereas the collegiate church at Ottobeuren is indebted to Johann Michael Feichtmayr for the biggest part of its stuccoworks and for a number of its figures and relief-works too.

Several times, of course, people prospected for gold and silver in the Ammer Valley, in the 15th and 16th centuries. The Ammergauers did not grow rich on it, however, and the prospecting always had to be given up again because the output was far too small at all times.

Oberammergau's history was one of ups and downs in the 16th and 17th centuries, bad and good times following each other in rapid succession. In 1552 Prince Elector Moritz von Sachsen invaded the Ammer Gau, his hordes looting Ettal and Oberammergau, maltreating monks, burghers, and peasants, and making game of sacred things: The damaging of the Ettal miraculous image is ascribed to him. In 1632 the Swedes came to Oberammergau where, according to a note in the church's account of 1635, they sacked the Lord's house and wilfully destroyed whatever they could not take along. At Ettal the monks had been

able to save themselves as well as the sacred cups, the paraments, and the miraculous image. Nevertheless the monastery's porter, Peter Josef Hess, and Johannes Zieglmaier, the organist of the collegiate church, who both had volunteered to remain behind, were cruelly murdered by the disappointed soldiery. The abbot of Ettal, it is true, obtained — against payment of a contributional tax — a so-called Salvaguadia-letter from the Swedish General in command, Oxenstierna, who had his headquarters at Augsburg. But then the emperor's troops came who were hardly any better than the Swedes. War-taxes, quarterings of soldiers, and the like were unbearable burdens to the people. Commercial traffic had stopped altogether. Nobody cared for art. Waggoners and woodcarvers were out of work, valley and village were impoverisheed and run down.

On top of all that the plague came over the mountains. Virtually: Over the mountains down into the village. The old Oberammergau village-chronicle of 1733 reports: "By diligently guarding the village we succeeded in warding off any contagion until church-ale. Then a man by the name of Schisler, who had been employed throughout the summer by one Mair of Eschenlohe, brought the pestilence into the village. He had come to celebrate church-ale with his family. The evening before he had crossed the mountain of Eschenlohe, and since his house was the first one of the whole village, up near the Laine, he was suffered to enter. He went back to Eschenlohe by the way he had come, but already on Monday following church-ale he died. From this day on until October 28th, 84 persons died here". That was in 1632 and it lasted till Simeon and Judae's Day, 1633. The whole village seemed to be in danger of being wiped out. It was then that the representatives of the community gathered and made the vow "to perform the tragedy of the passion every tenth year. Since that vow was made, not one person died of the plague although some of us already had the marks of pestilence on their bodies".

Already the year following, in 1634, the passion was performed for the first time according to that vow. It is, however, not to be supposed that the people of Oberammergau came to performing the passionply by that vow alone. A long time before that they had already represented the passion of the Lord amidst other "spiritual as well as worldly pastimes". Only by their vow, however, the passion-play became a sacred and religious act.

Up to 1674 the passion was performed on an open stage. In the oldest play-book that has been preserved, dating back to 1662, there is a note that says: "On May 15th, 1674, on Pentecost-Day, the play was again held and happily concluded". It ends with the words "that in future seats shall be made everywhere for the persons who look at it". As an exception the play was again repeated after six years, in 1680 that is. Since then it was repeated regularly at the end of each decade.

Only in 1770 there was a second exception and a serious crisis at that. A decree by the Prince Elector dated March 31, 1770, forebade the performance of passion-plays for the whole of the Electorate of Bavaria, including the plays at Oberammergau. The people of Oberammergau did not surrender their vow so readily. On April 20th the community submitted the first application to the Clerical Council at the capital. First of all they called attention to the fact that the community had vowed to perform the passion-play every tenth year "already a hundred and some thirty years ago, i. e. in 1634, on account of a then prevailing pestilential disease and plague" and that therefore they were under obligation "to all the more and

diligently keep said vow made by their ancestors, inasmuch as it faithfully and justly had been kept every tenth year since".

Aside of this the material damage was spoken of that the community could not help suffering if this prohibition was to be maintained: "We moreover had already 4000 copies printed (of the passion-text), and on the repairing of costumes, cutting and hauling of the wood necessary for the stage we wellnigh spent 200 florins. Into many towns and villages that are far from here we sent copies, so that many people will come here, some of them who will make a 2 days' journey. Ten years ago over 10 000 people travelled here, and now we cannot notify all these people and tell them that this said passion-tragedy must not be performed any longer". The applicants further explained: "Since according to the contents of the aforesaid most gracious order only passion-tragedies are prohibited that take place in fasting-time and in the holy week before Easter, we most devotedly beg to state that ours is presented on June 4th and on June 11th, and that all is done under the supervision of the clergy here, and that all passes in a most solemn manner, without any impropriety at all."

Nevertheless the application was made in vain. On May 2nd the following decision was given: "The supplicants are refused their passion-play and are referred to the order heretofore decreed. If their play be a vow, they shall replace same by some other religious act, such as an annual sermon or certain hours of prayer."

A new supplication directed to Prince Elector Max Joseph III himself, was without results. "Be it known to the supplicants of the community of Oberammergau that their petition has been rejected once and forever."

In 1780, however, the Oberammergauers met with complete success. It was the program of the new Prince Elector, Karl Theodor, to further economical life wherever it seemed possible, and the Ammergauers knew very well how to profit by this tendency of the government. Repeating their reasons for performing the passion-play in another supplication, they especially emphasized by points 3 and 4 the economic advantages that would result therefrom, not only for Oberammergau and its surroundings, but also for the rest of the whole country. To these reasons, harmonizing with the tendency of a wise government as they were, the Prince Elector could not shut his ears. On January 8th he gave the permission for the play, not only for 1780 but "that it may be repeated henceforth every tenth year and may be performed in public without any hindrance."

When in 1791 — following a supplication made by the sons of some Dachau burghers to be permitted to perform a similar religious play — "the performance of all kinds of spiritual as well as worldly tragedies, plays, and comedies was prohibited for townspeople and country-folk", this decree particularly mentioned, however, that "the privilege given to the community of Oberammergau in 1780 remained untouched thereby, and that said community had the right once in every ten years to publicly perform a play at Whitsuntide called "The Old and the New Testament".

In 1794 permission was given to perform in 1795 "The Wanderer on the Way of the Cross", the "School of the Cross" as it is called nowadays.

But already in 1810 a new danger arose for the passion-play: A sharp decree of the Prince Elector, dated September 14th, reminded the officials that they were "responsible and liable themselves up to a fine of 30 Reichstalers to see to it that the regulations concerning the prohibition of passion-plays were properly complied with".

The Ettal Court of Administration at Murnau therefore declared that also the Oberammergau privileges had expired on grounds of that new decree. Again a delegation of burghers went to the capital in the hope of obtaining the necessary permission to continue their plays by speaking personally to the authorities there. The latter, elucidated as they were, rejected them with harsh and ridiculing words. An understanding intercessor, however, came to their aid in this critical moment, Georg Sambuga, a clerical councillor, who later on became the instructor of King Lewis I. He used his influence with kind King Max I so that the latter deigned to permit this "harmless affair" for 1811, "the play to be considered a rural festivity more or less."

"The days of sorrow had come to an end end in the course of the following decades, the Ammergauers — guided by careful management and by ever-increasing sympathy from all parts of the population — have made the simple keeping of their vow what it is today, an event that carries the name of that little village in the Bavarian Mountains out into all the countries of the world." (Karl Trautmann.)

Twice since then the passion-plays had to be performed out of their regular turns. The first time it was the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war that interrupted the play; the actors had to exchange their sacred garments for tunics and helmets. The impersonator of Christ, Josef Lang, was called to the colours too. By special grace of the king, however, he was permitted to remain at Munich and to retain his long hair. After the end of the war, in 1871, the play was continued. Not all of the actors had returned, some of them having been called upon to take part in a heavenly "passion". The play itself, however, did not suffer through that loss.

As to the postponement of the 1920 play, the introduction of the 1922 play-book says: "Already in 1920 the play ought to have taken place. It was impossible, however, to take it up then. Political and economical conditions had to clear up a bit first, substitutes had to be found for, and trained in place of, the victims of the war. 67 sons of the village had met with death on the battle-fields. Many were still suffering from the grave consequences of wounds and diseases."

In relating the history of the passion-play we passed over certain historical events of the last centuries which may not be omitted by the chronicler.

At the beginning of the 17th century Oberammergau is already a well organized orderly community. Taxes and duties were minutely specified. The community salaried a schoolmaster, a barber, an inspector of wells; wise regulations gave protection from tramps, beasts of prey, and damages by flood. Whilst the roads were still deserted on account of the general unsafeness during and shortly after the Thirty Years' War, and the waggoners had bad times all round, woodcarving was being developed more and more. In this century especially the families of Eyrl, Ruez, Feistenmantel, and Nay won great fame as woodcarvers. What bloom Oberammergau woodcarving had reached then may be seen from the woodcarvers' trade regulations as fixed by the administrative authorities of the country. The woodcarvers violently protested against the expression "trade-regulations" as they did not want their art to be considered a trade. They went so far as to bring this matter before the court-council of the Prince Elector who, in his judgment of January 5th, 1682, characterized woodcarving as a free profession, deciding that the expression "trade-regulations" had to be changed into "woodcarving-regulations".

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The last decades of the 17th and the first decades of the 18th century brought about continuous troubles. It was under the reign of belligerent Prince Elector Max Emanuel that the Ammer Gau had to suffer a lot. Several times Ettal and Oberammergau were looted in those times. The Prince Elector had to flee, the country including the Ammer Valley was occupied by the Austrians.

houses at Gröningen and Amsterdam. Most of the aforesaid grew very wealthy and by their exportation they brought money to the other families of the village too. These merchants generally had a little estate in their native valley where they used to retire after the work of their lives had been done.

And again there was a time when all that wealth was destroyed. That was in the for-

Oberammergau in the year 1820.
From an old picture in the possession of J. Ledermann in Oberammergau.

In 1715 finally, following the return of the Prince Elector, peace and prosperity came back and better times began to dawn for trade and industry.

Woodcarving florished as never before. Oberammergau products, images of saints, crucifixes of wood, wax, or clay were sent into all the world. The Hetts and Dasers had their agency at St. Petersburg, the Lindners and Hohenleitners, Veits and Echtlers had theirs in Gothenburg and Drontheim; the Bauhofers, Samms and Hochenleitters were represented at Cadix, the Bauhofers and Faistenmantels at Bremen and in Holland; the Buchwiesers had their branch-

ties when Prince Elector Karl Adalbert of Bavaria waged war in order to win back his Austrian inheritance of lands. Until 1746 the Ammergauers had to suffer from these wars and the majority of them grew poor.

On top of that there was a failing of the harvest in 1740, and a famine in the year following, and afterwards several fires broke out in succession. Half of the village having burnt down, terrific floods were caused by the Laine River. The sums that were required to repair the damage and to make preparations for preventing further damages by flood were so high that they hardly could be collected by the community. In the se-

Lincoln Christian College

venties there were some more bad crops and the famines repeated themselves. In the nineties new wars commenced. The French and the Austrians alternately marched through the country. In 1800 the village was bombarded and looted by the French. The Austrians commanded by General Grüne defended the village and the mountain-passes with their Tyrolian sharpshooters but finally they had to give way to numerical superiority. Captain Vauthier de Baillamont of the "Manfredini-Regiment" who held out somewhat longer at Ettal was made prisoner by the French. Baron Vauthier, a Dutchman by birth, later on visited Oberammergau several times, and even in 1850 he had a mass said in the church there and alms given to the poor in memory of the fallen soldiers of his regiment.

All these events tended to ruin that solitary village that was cut off from the world and its sources of industry. The biggest blow to Oberammergau woodcarving was delivered by the Grödner competitors who, being very alert and businesslike people, peddled their own products everywhere and who for some reason or other were able to sell their goods cheaper. Towards the end of the century Europe numbered about 150 Grödner firms whereas only few Oberammergauers were still partners in foreign houses. Some enterprising men like the Lang brothers opened stores of their own and entered into relations with foreign firms. The continuous wars, however, lamed these enterprises and thus the new century dawned on the Ammer Gau like a rainy day, foreboding sadness and grief.

It is a strange thing about history. It does not advance regularly, step by step so to speak, it does not work out its destinies organically as it were in growth, but it takes pleasure in following some sort of a zig-zag course running from one extreme into another, and mostly beyond the mark.

We find that everywhere when we look at history. One day it is the spirit of severe conservativism that rules, the next day it is replaced by its opposite, by extreme liberalism, by freedom unlimited; and the day after that it may be gross reaction that comes back again to take its turn. Thus in Bavaria the strictly clerical movement of anti-reformation under the ministry of Montgelas was followed by an anti-clerical movement that bordered on iconoclasm. Old Ettal was still in its prime. In 1711 an academy for knights with a boarding school for young noblemen had been founded there which was frequented by the flower of Bavarian and Austrian families. Not only teachers of all faculties of science were called to lecture in this institute but also fencing- and riding-masters, teachers of gymnastics, and professors of military science were employed. When coming from Oberau and shortly before entering the village one may still perceive the retrenchments that were dug by the young cavaliers in their war-games. Once every year a splendid festivity was held accompanied by military exercises, sham-battles, theatre-plays and prizes. The most influential people used to come to Ettal from Munich and from the neighbouring estates. An old picture of 1734 still exists showing such a sham-attack made by these young gentlemen. As a consequence of the Austrian War of Succession of 1740 the academy soon decayed and was finally abandoned altogether. For a long time already the rich estates of the monasteries had attracted the attention of the government that had grown poor by wars. Thus the unheard-of came true: The secularisation of the Bavarian monasteries.

Until a few years ago some very old people still remembered how the treasures of Ettal Library were handled. They had seen themselves how the priceless folio-volumes and manuscripts were loaded on

rack-waggons to be taken to Munich. Some books fell through the staffs and were picked up by those passing by. Many people who had derived a modest income from the monastery were now out of work and Ammergau ceased to be the seat of a court of justice. The waggons transporting mer-

French and the Tyrolians alternately fell upon the poor village, looting and extorting everything, and each passing of troops added its weight to the poverty of the population.

In 1812 eleven Oberammergau boys had to leave for Russia and only three of them

Entwurff /
Der von einer Hochadlichen Ritter = Academie zu Ettal, von denen die
Architectura Militaire allda erlehrnenden Herrn Herrn Cavaliers, nach Jährlicher Gewohnheit gehaltenen Lust-Attaque, und eines / um auffgeworffenen Preiß vorgenommenen Artillerie-Exercice. 1. Sept. 1734.

A. Das Castell. B. Das Laager. C. Haubt-Batterie. D. Approchen. E. Batteries à Mortiers. F. Communications-Linie. G. Parallele. H. Erster Angriff. I. Erste Contre-Mine. K. Erster Außfall. L. Erster Succurs. M. Anderte Contre-Mine. N. Anderter Außfall. O. Anderter Succurs. P. Eroberung der Außenwercke. Q. Capitulation.

Der Anfang diſes Militaire-und Artillerie-Exercice, wird unter Anführung deß (titl.) Herrn Grafen von Hollnſtein / ꝛc. als General, durch den in 5. Colonnen formierten Aufzug / ſambt Mitführung der Artillerie / auf den außgeſteckten Waffen-Platz gemacht / worauff mit dreymahligem Salve, und Außwerffung der Granaden, daß gewohnliche Granadiers-Exercice, und nach diſem daß gewohnliche Stuck-Scheiben Schieſſen vor ſich gehet. Worunter 2. Colonnen in daß nach der Ordnung aufgeſchlagene Laager / die dritte Colonne aber ſich in das Caſtell ziehet mit alſobald nachfolgender

ATTAQUE

From an old engraving by Gottfried Dorsch in Ettal, in the possession of Capt. E. Lang in Würzburg.

chandise now travelled on various other roads that had been opened just at that time. The possibility to give their sons an education at moderate expenses was taken away from these people and likewise the poor were deprived of their firm support.

From now on the passion-play-that had already saved Oberammergau from many a danger and plague — was their last hope. The first 15 years passed amidst the terrific troubles of the Napoleonic Wars. The

came back. In 1813 and 1814 four Oberammergau men died for their country.

At home, too, the Ammergauers trained themselves in the handling of arms. They formed a company of their own in the National Guard of the third Class so as to be able to follow the call to the colours if necessary. At the end of the wars there were again famines, bad crops, and finally a general starvation of the kind that the unfortunate people took to eating grass,

snails, and bran. In these times of misery Prelate Herkulan Schwaiger, the last prior of Rothenbuch then residing at Ammergau, had wheat brought from afar, had it ground and distributed among the destitute.

In 1830 the passion-play (that so far had been performed on the churchyard) was for the first time presented on the actual pas-

Unfortunately the development of wood-carving did not keep up with the development of the passion-plays.

In 1840 Ludwig Steub still deplores the old-fashioned forms, the faulty anatomy, and the complete lack of new and original ideas. As already mentioned, the continuous wars did a lot of harm in this respect too. The

Oberammergau in the year 1840.
From an old picture in the possession of Guido Lang in Oberammergau.

sion-play site outside the village. The play thereby lost its intimate character so to speak and founded its world-wide fame.

In 1831 King Lewis I visited the passion-village to the greatest joy of his faithful subjects.

Already in 1840 the passion-play was attended by so many visitors that the theatre — in spite of its being able to hold 8000 persons — proved to be far too small. The play consequently had to be repeated several times.

19th century opening up new highways and introducing railroads everywhere, the quiet mountain-village was as much as doomed to oblivion during the ten years that lay between each passion. No longer did these people live in a place that adjoined a road of world-wide importance. The commercial road that once had been, became a local highway like hundreds of others in Bavaria. On top of that the local merchants were shortsighted enough to refuse an offer from the government to transform the communal carving-school into a state-school. The go-

vernment then simply founded a state-school for woodcarving at Partenkirchen, thus supporting a dangerous competitor in the nearest vicinity. In the export-trade competitive Swiss carvings, less artistic in taste but considerably cheaper, flooded the foreign markets.

Only after 1880 — after the debts of the community had been lessened somewhat by the enormous success of the passion-play, and after the carving-school had been assisted by state-funds after all — the artistically refined director of the drawing-school, Mr. Ludwig Lang, and some furnishers succeeded in getting a new spirit into woodcarving. New patterns were designed that were adapted to the style of our times, more interesting forms were found, and greatest importance was attached to the study of anatomy. Already the children got a thorough training in drawing and sketching. We therefore may say that as far as commercial relations and quality of products are concerned Oberammergau woodcarving has again reached the level on which it was at the beginning of the 18th century.

Since the seventies Oberammergau has a trade-school for woodcarving. It was enenlarged several times since and its results may be said to be excellent.

On April 20th, 1883, the community was afflicted by the loss of its "good spirit", the last link between the past and the present, Clerical Councillor Daisenberger. From 1845 up to his death he had been a member of the community, first a spiritual father, later on a true and faithful friend.

The year of 1920 numbers among the few where the passion-play had to be left out, resp. (?) postponed. In 1914 several hundred Oberammergau men had gone to war; 67 of them remained on the field. There had been many among them upon whom the play might have set great hopes. But more than this loss of actors it was the misery of the starved German people in general that forbade the performance of the play in that year. Even in 1922 it was difficult enough to approach the keeping of the vow. The religious and moral success of that play was great, the financial results were next to nil. The inflation swallowed the proceeds just as quick as a drop of water evaporates on glowing iron.

Such are the rough outlines of the history of Oberammergau. Much may have broken down in the outward forms that once gave the Ammer Gau its historical value. The true spirit, however, remains and blossoms on for ever. To conclude, a little poem by an old Ammergauer of the fifties may be added. It weeps for the times gone by and yet it ends with a consoling thought:

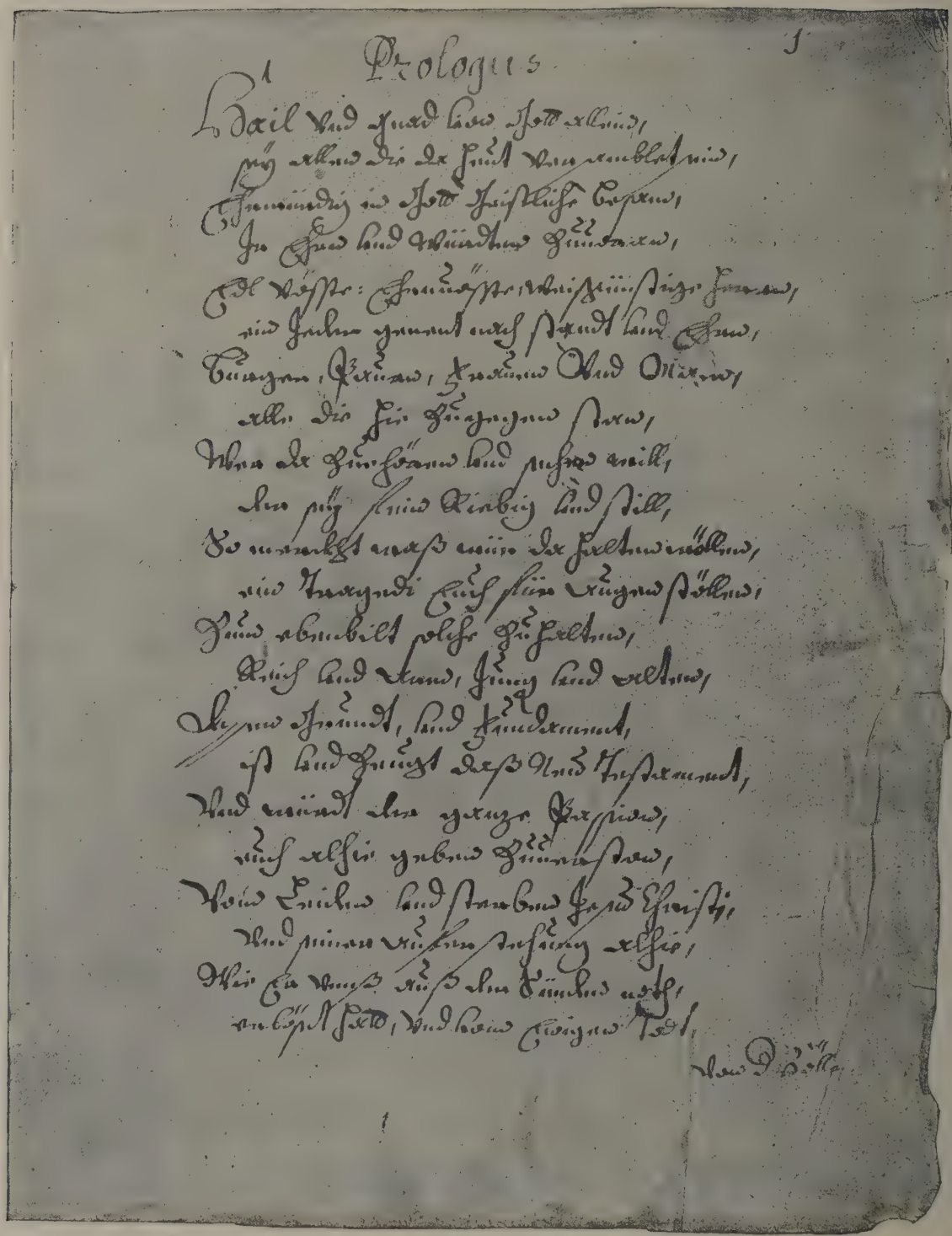
(The German rhyme does not appear in English)

Out of many seeds
Life's green pasture grows;
A bunch of soldanels
Is what I picked at dawn.

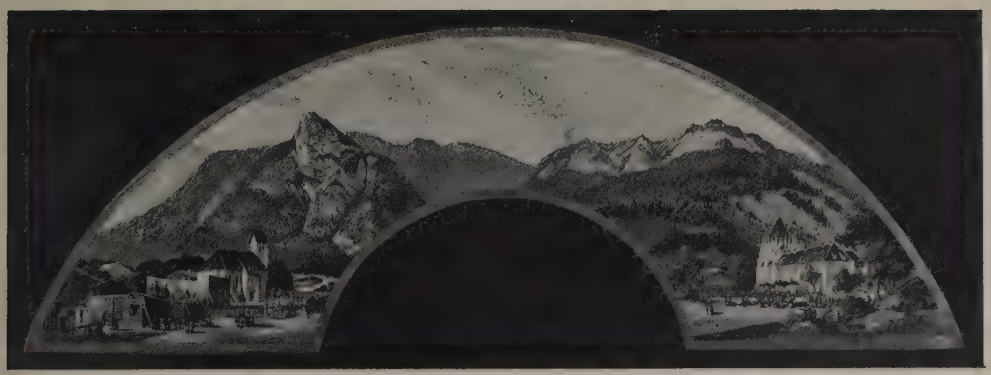
High up on the summit
You see a little cross;
For a thousand years the blossoms
Creep quietly around its foot.

That is why its wood
Is scented with delicious odour.
Often some son of the mountains
Prayed up there, dreaming.

Be not embittered seeing
That a sacred spot is made profane:
Look! The little c r o s s may wither
But the r o s e s blossom on for ever.



Facsimile of the first page of the Text of the eldest Ammergau Passion Play of the year 1662.
(The original manuscript is in the possession of the firm of G. Lang sel. Erben, Oberammergau.)



Oberammergau with the Passion Theatre in 1634.

The Development of the Passion-Play and the Passion-Text

When looking into the development of the passion-play from its first beginnings up to our times, we above all cannot help asking ourselves: How old is the Oberammergau passion-play? We know that it is first mentioned in connection with the vow made on account of the plague in 1633; we furthermore learn that the first performance took place in 1634. Further details are not to be found in the somewhat scanty chronicle, nor are there any playbooks in existence that would date back to those times, the oldest text we know concluding with the remark: „Newly edited and described in the year of the Lord 1662." It is considerably younger therefore than the first performance of 1634. It is very probable, however, that in Oberammergau, as in other villages, passion-plays were performed a great deal earlier than that, presumably already in the 15th century. According to Dr. Holland it is the fact that the chronicle speaks of the passion-play as of something wellknown, as of a matter of course, that seems to corroborate this theory. A very particular and circumstantial account being given of the appearing of the pestilence, including even the name of the unfortunate spreader of the disease, it seems strange that the passion-play is not mentioned as something new or little-known heretofore. The chronicle, on the contrary, mentions it simply as the passion-play, like something that has come down from the forefathers and is by no means a novelty. Further proof for that is seen by Dr. Holland in the speed with which the keeping of the vow was put into practice In autumn 1633 the performance is decided upon and already in spring 1634 — that is hardly more than ¾ of a year later — it is put into scene. Rightly Dr. Holland says: "He who knows what pains must be taken for years and what preparations are necessary in order to perform a play involving several hundreds of actors will admit that the idea could not have come

to the minds of the Oberammergauers all of a sudden, in one night so to speak, especially as it would have been an impossibility with country-folk lacking in experience."

The researches made into the text by Dr. August Hartmann fully confirm our opinion. Carefully scrutinising the passion-text of 1662, Dr. Hartmann found that its contents chiefly formed part of a passion-play that had been written already in the 15th century, play-book of which had been deposited with the chapter of "St. Ulric and Afra" at Augsburg.

Later on, in the middle of the 16th century, parts of another passion-text by Sebastian Wild, mastersinger at Augsburg, were drawn into it. Afterwards slips of paper containing passages of the Weilheim passion-play by Johann Aelbl, a curate, were glued to the 1662 copy.

In the preceding chapter we already referred to the reciprocity of relations between Augsburg and Ammergau. Just in the 15th century the family of the Arzats (being composed of natives of Augsburg and Nuremberg then residing at Ammergau) founded a mass-benefice; up to the 16th century only relatives of the donator used to be appointed for it. One among these was a cannon of the chapter of St. Moritz at Augsburg. It is to be supposed that by these relations the text of St. Ulric and Afra had already come to Oberammergau in the 15th century in order to be used for the performances there. These performances may have been temporarily stopped by the invasions of the king of the Swedes, by pestilence and other plagues, or else the complete text was possibly destroyed by fire when in 1620 the presbytery burnt down. Afterwards it was perhaps reconstructed on the grounds of still existing parts or simply according to the memory of former actors and following the outlines of the text by Wild. But only a considerable time later on — after some more passages of the Weilheim play had been inserted — the whole of the text was remodelled. And this new transcript is the passion-text of 1662.

If the Ammergauers had not had a passion-play before 1634, it is not to be supposed that they would have adopted a text that had been written nearly two centuries ago then, a text that needs must have been obsolete in both, language and conception. Thus the statement made by Trautmann — the Ammergau passion-play would not have to be considered a product of the people "but a surviving specimen of anti-reformation dramatics as influenced by the Jesuits" — collapses in itself.

It was a mere coincidence that once a Benedictine father adapted the text to the style then in vogue with Jesuit comedies and besides, this transformed text was made use of for 20 years only. The circumstance, further on, that the Ammergau stage outwardly somewhat resembled a Jesuit stage does not justify the idea that the whole passion-play may be taken for a product of Jesuit art. Father Rosner's revised text was used in 1750 and in 1760, but already in 1780 it was simplified again by Father Magnus Knipfelberger as the flowery language of the former did not appeal to the simple minds of the Ammergauers.

It is comprehensible that the Oberammergau passion-play had to adapt itself to the changing tastes of the times as it was done in 1750 and 1780. For our comparatively refined taste, however, a passion-play in mediaeval rhymery as recommended by Professor Sepp would mean a profanation of the sacred subject. What we want to see is not an example of mediaeval art, a historical curiosity as it is now and then represented on an ordinary stage. We want to see the suffering and the dying of our Saviour in a form that is apt to move our

Schauspiel,

oder

alt- und neues Testament

in dem für uns

leidenden Gottmenschen

zur

Betrachtung vorgestellt

und

von einer ehrsamen Gemeinde

zu

Oberammergau

auf öffentlicher Schaubühne

mit höchster, und gnädigster Erlaubniß

aufgeführt

den 15ten und 22sten May, und 15ten Brachmonat

1780.

Augsburg,

Gedruckt bey Johann Bernhard Stadlberger, kathol. Buchdrucker.

Faksimile vom Textbuch 1780.

Geneigter Leser!

Wir haben nun das Vergnügen, gegenwärtiges Schauspiel, welches unsere Vorältern wegen einer im Jahre 1634. herrschenden gefährlichen Seuche alle zehn Jahre einmal offentlich vorzustellen nicht ohne glücklichem Erfolge gelobet haben, wieder aufführen zu dörfen. — Es ist indessen in etwas verkürzet worden, um die Geduld der Zuseher nicht zu misbrauchen. — Wer ein Kritiker ist, mag es unsertwegen tadeln, wie es ihm beliebt. — Nur keine Kunst, und Regelmäßigkeit suche er darinn. — Es besteht nicht so fast aus Entwickelungs-vollen Handlungen, als aus simpeln Vorstellungen, welche nichts anders, als Erbauung, — Andacht gegen den sterbenden Heiland, und Rührung des Herzens zum Endzweck haben, so wie es der Schutzgeist dieses Spiels im

Eingange
erklären wird. —

Gebet acht, — sehet, und nehmet es zu Herzen; — es wird zu euerm Vorheile gereichen. — Nihil enim tam salutiferum nobis est, quam cogitare, quanta pro nobis pertulerit Deus & Homo. S. Bern. serm 23. ad Fratr. in erem. — Nichts ist so heilsam, als der Gedanken, was, und wie viel der Gottmensch für uns gelitten.

hearts more than simply reading or being told.

That the form of the passion-play is the most impressive the simpler and the more popular its language is, this fact was particularly recognised by Father Ottmar Weiß and by his pupil, Curate Daisenberger. The passion-text in all its simple truth, in its immediate connection with the Gospel and its unassuming clearness is so beautiful and answers so fully the needs of the people that any alteration — save an occasional shortening of lengthy passages or the like — would have to be considered a mannerism or disfigurement.

Thus the Oberammergau passion-play, right from its origin, is based on the religious strength of the people's souls and its realisation likewise is due to the energy of the native inhabitants only. Moreover, in the territory between the monasteries of Rothenbuch and Ettal not the slightest traces of Reformation could ever be ascertained; it is clear therefore that the influence of Anti-Reformation too was next to nil. The whole country formed a solid wall of faith so to speak. The influence of the conservative, highly educated Benedictines secured the population a steady, unwavering religious life, one that was not exposed to any fluctuations whatsoever. It is possible that the Jesuits gained some minor influence at the time when Ettal was made an academy of knights and foreign teachers were called into the country. At Oberammergau, however, this influence could have been but a temporary one, at any rate they but influenced the passion-play in a very superficial manner.

If we look into the passion-text of St. Ulric and Afra as edited by Dr. August Hartmann (which learned Plazidus Braun calls "Passio Domini in Lingua vulgari") it immediately becomes clear to us that we have here an example of genuine mediaeval poetry. I would not even say "popular poetry", for the language is so noble and partly of such a tenderness of feeling that it reminds us more of the best times of minstrel-poetry than of the somewhat crude folklore of Hans Sachs' period. I must confess I was moved by some passages of that text. Unfortunately they do not appear any longer in the Ammergau passion-text of today, and so I think I had best quote some of them to the reader now.

There is a passage where Mary is standing under the cross, after the crucifixion. Looking up to her son she says:

Woe! My child how pale thou art!
And so high up thou art
That I can't reach thine hands!
Now join in prayer all of ye
That this cross fain would bend to me
That mine child's wounds I see
That I may drink of His beloved blood.

— — — — — —

The other passage I should like to quote is partly contained in the passion-text of 1662. It is the wonderfully tender and moving scene of the descent from the cross. Joseph of Arimathea has gone to Pilate to ask him to be permitted to take Jesus down from the cross. The latter grants this:

(The German rhyme does not appear in English)

"Pilatus to Ihesu" (probably a mistake of the pen. It ought to be "Joseph" here):

"Go thither then and take Him down;
The corpse of Jesus to the grave belongs."

"After this Joseph and Nicodemus again go to the cross. Speaks Joseph to Mary, the mother of the Lord:

"Be greeted, Mary noble-born!
Thy child's death filleth me with wrath.
Thine heart's bitterness
Is pain in mine heart too."

"Now Joseph and Nicodemus take the body of Jesus from the cross and put it on Mary's lap. So speaks Mary:

"Woe! Thou dear beloved child!
Thine eyes have expired!
Woe! Thine rosy lips
How pale they are in this hour.
Woe! Mine dear beloved son
Have I to live without thee now?
Thou wilt not come to life again,
And still, thou must not go into the grave!
I will love thee, dead as thou art.
Nay! I will not leave thee thus!"

"Says John to Mary:

"Mary, pure maid, listen!
Do this by noble women's honour.
Hold on in thine lament
Since it cannot be different!
Let me hence be thine only child
And by mine mother dear!
Think of Him! 'twas He who said so
In His death, when He was in His greatest pain!"

"They now try to console the mother who, absorbed in her grief, will not surrender the body of her child. Asks Mary Magdalen:

"Mary, look! The night draws near.
Do it for all women's honour!
Ere it gets too dark,
Have Him buried in the earth!"

"Mary Cleophae and Mary Salome unite in asking the pained mother:

"Ah, pure honoured woman,
We fully rely on thee.
Thou wilt not act so badly
Towards thineself, thine sister and me.
Let the body be buried
Before they take it away from us."

"Joseph to Mary:

"Let thineself be persuaded, noble woman.
Thou hast suffered enough pain.
Give me now thine beloved son
And end thine plaintive wailing.
Let me put Him into the grave
As long as I am free to do so."

— — — — — —

Do not these scenes contain something of the tenderness and sweetness of German feeling?

It is the earnest, faithful love of the people for their Saviour and His dear mother as we find it manifested by thousands of examples throughout the middle ages.

Just in the text of St. Ulric and Afra we find many deep, wonderfully human traits.

Thus the relation between mother and son is an extremely affectionate and purely human one. The mother's last lamentations when they carry Him to the grave are addressed to her child only, to her dearly beloved child:

"Woe! I say, and Woe to me again!
What is to become of me now?
Oh God! All ye women of the world,
Chaste and pure, ye suffer with me.
Help me to bewail mine child
Since ye know how dear He was.
I have lost mine dear child
No dearer child was ever born.
Woe! Where I am to find comfort?
Mine tears have wetted mine shirt
So that I could wring it, wailing."

It is this total humanisation of the sacred subject that brings it all so near to us.

Where the poet has to describe the human he remains genuine and finds touching words. Where he ventures into the realm of the divine, his wisdom comes to an end and he finds a means for expressing it only in the hymns and rites of his church by which the deity manifests itself to him daily.

In the midst of Latin songs we now and then encounter typical German expressions that strike us as being exceptionally beautiful. According to my opinion they indicate a still older origin of this poetry, older than

the 15th century. The word "säld" for happiness, the exclamation "Eya, pure honoured woman", the expression "Clagelich" (wailing) and the spelling of some of the words remind us of the language that was used by Walther von der Vogelweide.

In what relation is the passion-text of 1662 to this genuinely mediaeval play? I took great pains to patiently study this eye-injuring manuscript.

And I was greatly surprised at finding so many beauties, so many truly dramatic scenes besides typically vulgar trivialities. One could not help noticing with what deep feeling the author had tried to grasp the spiritual meaning of the Christ.

Theological elements are already prevailing in a much higher degree, showing that the writer had got a foothold on the texts of the Gospels themselves. An angel f. i. shows the sufferings of Christ to "Soul", an allegoric character, entering into discussions that remind one of Thomas a Kempis. All this in its turn is intermingled with genuinely popular features of an almost touching naiveté, which latter, however, occasionally slips into crudeness or even trivial trash.

Save some insignificant alterations the play is to its greatest extent indentic with that of St. Ulric and Afra. The Wild text, however, shows considerable differences in its first part; its second half again has been woven into the Oberammergau text. The play begins with the altered prologue of the Wild text:

"Blessings and grace from God alone
To all who are assembled here today" &c.

The prologus now explains that they are about "to put a tragedy before the spectators' eyes

Whose base and fundament
Is the New Testament".

The prologus admonishes the audience to take the play to heart, to behave quietly and properly ("for said tragedy is no joke"), and to solemnly behold the sufferings of Christ.

Although this prologue seems to foot partly on the Wild edition, it appears to be the oldest part of the text as a whole with regard to language and contents. In any case it also was "renovated" in 1662.

Now comes a scene which is contained neither in the text of St. Ulric and Afra nor — as far as may be judged from the work of Hartmann — in the play written by Wild.

Satan makes his appearance and reads a letter from Lucifer in which — contrary to the words of the prologus — he asks the audience not to pay any attention to the play but to desecrate it by laughing and jesting, so that he may be able to welcome them all in hell some day.

Now the action begins in strict accordance with the text of St. Ulric and Afra. Christ and His disciples are at Bethany and He speaks of the time having come when He has to depart from the world to work out its salvation. He then goes with the disciples to the house of Simon the Leper where Mary Magdalen comes to anoint His feet, whereas Judas is railing at this extravagance. Jesus reprimands him with the following words:

"Judas, and all ye dear disciples,
Be not angry at her for that.
She has done a good deed
For she has come already now
To oint mine corpse here
For mine burial to be.
The poor ye have always with ye
And ye can always pity them
If ye wish to do them some good
As I know ye are wont to do.
But me ye must leave soon
So let her be content
She has done what she could,
She proved that by her doing."

Christ then speaks to Martha who criticises her sister (Mary Magdalen in this case) because the latter fails to assist her in waiting on the guests.

"Martha, Martha! Much diligent thou art now
And much grieved thou wilt be in a short while.
Mary hath chosen a part
That will never fail her!"

Now Jesus sends out two disciples to Jerusalem to look for a house where they may eat the Easter-lamb. After their departure He bids the women farewell, announcing them His imminent death. Now follows a touching and very human scene which I should like to quote here because — in a somewhat altered form — it is also contained in the passion-text of today: His farewell to Mary. Christ requests the disciples to step aside a little so that He may speak to His mother alone.

Christ:

"The time now has come
That I go to Jerusalem
To eat the Easter-lamb there
With all of ye, oh mine disciples.
Step aside a little
Because I have to speak a word
To mine beloved mother here
Ere I depart from Bethany.
Now dearest mother, since
It cannot and will not be otherwise
But that I must part with thee,
So it is befitting that —
Before I suffer death and
Oh! so much scorn and wrath —
I open mine child's heart to thee.
Well, then, oh mine sorrowful mother
May God, mine father, bless thee!
I thank thee, oh mother,
That thou borest me without pain
For nine months in thine womb.
Ah, mother, grieved woman,
With much care didst thou bring me up
When I was sucking thine breasts.
I thank thee for all the worry and burden
Thou sufferedst for me, thy child.
I depart now but I do return.
Farewell, I prithee
Do not suffer too much!
I pray, be not too sad
For all I am going to suffer now
Will bring blessings to thee and many!"

Mary:

"Oh dearly beloved Jesus!
How could it be
That mine heart were not sad?
For at all times I loved thee
And now I must hear — oh woe to me!
That thou wilt suffer death?
Oh weighty thing, oh hardest fate!
My heart will almost break!
Why dost thank me, dearest son?
All I have done to thee
I did as hand-maid to thine divinity.
I served thee in joy and in grief
And as a mortal I behaved,
Like any other mother, and no more.
So it is not fit that thou thankest me.
For one, my son, I prithee:
Refuse me not, let me go with ye —
What may befall thee, let it befall me too.

Christ:

It is not so to be. Stay here
Go back again to Bethany
Stay with thine cousin, Martha,
Until I shall return."

Mary does not calm herself. Three times she beseeches the Lord to let her die with Him or at least to let her accompany Him to Jerusalem. In a gentle but very decisive manner Jesus refuses, referring to the mission she has to fulfil after His death as a consoler of the disciples. Meanwhile Judas Iskariot urges to set forth; "mine heart knows neither rest nor peace" he says, thinking of the treachery he is about to commit.

In spite of many touching passages we already miss the naive conception. No longer do we see the all-forgetting love of a mother as laid down by the text of St. Ulric and Afra. Here Mary is already aware of the Lord's divinity and in spite of all her motherly love the whole scene is saturated with what I feel inclined to call official spirit. This, no doubt, must be attributed to its more recent origin for it is not to be found either in the text of St. Ulric and Afra nor in that of the Wild edition.

John and Peter, the two disciples sent forth by Jesus to have the supper prepared, meanwhile have found the host and carried out their orders. When everything is ready Christ appears, speaking friendly words of greeting to the host. All sit down at table and as soon as they are seated Christ speaks the "Our Father" in which prayer all the disciples join.

Now Christ has a basin of water brought and the scene of the washing of the feet follows. Next comes the inauguration of the Holy Supper, strictly in accordance with the Gospel-text. Even in bad rhymery it does not fail to impress one deeply, a simple dignity having been maintained after all. Now Christ begins to speak of Judas' treachery, like in the Gospel, and then an original scene follows:

Judas leaves the Last-Supper (1662). (An angel takel away his halo).

Judas Iskariot:

"Say, master, dost mean me?
Shall I betray thee?"

Christ:

"Verily, I tell thee:
It is as thou sayest!"

John:

"Lord, let me know the traitor!"

Christ:

"It is he to whom I shall give this morsel!"

(Christ takes a piece of bread, gives it to Judas, and says:)

"Take the bread from me, Judas.
Go to it soon and to the deed

That is in thine heart!
For thou knowest neither rest nor peace!"

Judas accepts the bread. In that moment an angel appears and takes the halo of glory from him. Judas angrily rises from table, overthrows his chair and runs away. A devil follows him. Now Simon says to Judas:

Simon:

"Whither dost run, Judas?
Methinks thou wilt do some shopping
As thou runnest so fast
And throwest down thine chair."

It is not improbable that "shopping" in this connection had some ironical meaning in the slang of olden times, perhaps as if we now would say: You run as if you had stolen something, or the like. Strange to say, this question of Peter's is still contained literally in the text of today, another proof that much has been taken over from the mediaeval play.

Follow Peter's assertions and Christ's prophesy that he would forsake Him three times. Afterwards a prayer of thanks is said.

Christ then takes leave from the host who does not want to let Him go. Advising the disciples to buy swords He says that they are about to go

"Into a garden
Where we shall await the enemy".

The next scene is that where Judas sells Christ to the Supreme Council. This scene contains another original feature, the Rabbi saying:

"We have thirty Pfennigs at our disposal
They are of good silver and of old make;
We saved them up since long time
For they are the coins for which Joseph
was sold."

One recognises the underlying symbol. The same silver coins that already served for a treachery once are to be used again for a similar purpose. The manner in which Judas tells of the supper is very queer too and it tends to show a complete lack of understanding on the part of Judas as compared to the mentality of the other disciples:

"He right away began to eat the lamb
Before any of us had begun,
And he gave us many orders."

Caiaphas:

"What orders did he give ye?"

Judas:

"I hardly understood what he meant.
He spoke a lot and washed our feet.
That made me mad at last
And so I rose and left them".

The coins are now counted and put into Judas' hand, each coin being accompanied by some verse.

Three devils appear who rejoice at the transaction and then the prologus comes to the front and discusses the treason of Judas who, as he says, has delivered Jesus "to the butcher".

The next scene is taken from the text of St. Ulric and Afra word by word, and we will refrain from quoting it here as it would occupy too much space. Mary there is recommending her son to the care of Judas, the traitor.

Now follows the scene on the Mount of Olives. We see the struggle of Jesus whilst the disciples are asleep; we see Him sink to the ground in despair and as He buries His face in His hands an angel comes to the forestage accompanied by "Man's Soul", a symbolic character; the sufferings and the struggle of the Divine are shown and explained to the latter. Thereupon an angel comes to comfort Jesus and after that He is taken prisoner, just as it is represented today. I do not want to bore the reader with the description of the almost endless evidence that is given before Pilate, the

whole action passing on more than slowly and the text becoming unbearably lengthy. Innumerous persons appear, that is the holy women, the knights and constables of Pilate, the soldiers of the Supreme Council, the scribes and officers of justice — in a word, a multitude of figures that seem to form part of the characteristics of the 16th century passion-play according to some old pictures of that time. In regular intervals the angel and "Soul" re-appear, the former explaining and showing to the latter what Christ has to suffer. It is remarkable how well certain traits of the old passion-play have been preserved until today, that is the tendency to show that the chief agitators against Christ were the traders and merchants of the temple whose interests had been impaired. Father Ottmar Weiss took this trait of revengefulness over into his work when remodelling the play. Another feature that has been maintained until now is the characterisation of Pilate; then as now he is described with a certain fondness of the subject. He is shown to be the only decent and well-bred person opposing the fanaticized jews and he has become a typical figure with the play, one that was not altered in any way up to the present day. After the crucifixion (which is carried out with all the barbarousness of those times) the two thieves are taken down from their crosses before Christ. As soon as they are laid on the ground one of them is seized by an angel who leads him to Paradise, whereas the other is taken to hell by a devil. Judas too (who meanwhile has committed suicide by hanging himself in the presence of the Supreme Council) is dragged to hell by three devils. Formerly the latter used to tear the guts out of Judas' body and devour them. They consisted of dough-nuts, however, that had been especially shaped for that purpose; so this scene was not altogether an unpleasant one for hell's young devils. Even at the beginning of the last century this custom is said to have been followed. The descent from the cross, as today, was accompanied by words of infinite love and tenderness.

The Crucifixion in the old Passion Plays.

The scene to follow is that of the burial as laid down in the text of St. Ulric and Afra, only that the speeches of the mourners are much longer and circumstantial. After His awakening Christ descends to Hell where He speaks to those that repent of their sins, telling them that He would show them "the road to Paradise".

Finally Mary comes to the grave and is told by the angel that Christ has risen. Immediately after that Christ Himself appears. Now some scenes are presented in which Christ shows Himself to the women and later on to the disciples; quarrels arise between the High Priests and the guards at the grave; at last Christ joins the disciples at Emmaus and now the play ends with the conversion of incredulous Thomas, which latter scene is literally taken over from the passion-text of Sebastian Wild.

This passion-text — a brief synopsis of which I tried to give here — was used with slight alterations up till 1740. Around

that time it was remodelled into the fashion of the Jesuit plays that were then in vogue. The remodeller was one Father Rosner who was living at Ettal. One cannot say, however, that Rosner's text was an altogether new product of Jesuit art, for Dr. Hartmann furnishes the proof that Rosner to a great extent skilfully transformed the old text into well-sounding Alexandrines. Innumerous allegoric characters were added; Death, Sin, Avarice, and Envy had to appear on the stage, each act being followed by living pictures taken from the Old Testament. The main characteristics of the Jesuit play (two parallel actions running by the side of each other and one being the symbol of the other) clearly become apparent. The plot follows the old text and is concluded by a sumptuous apotheosis.

Here, for the first time, music plays an important part in the performance. The choir is composed of a prologus and six guardian-angels, airs are sung, and the whole arrangement follows precisely the example of an Italian opera. In this style the passion was performed twice, in 1750 and in 1760; in 1770 the passion-play was cancelled. And now we behold a strange thing: The mind of the people rejects the foreign influence that was urged on them. It evolves a text that is fit for a new generation and wards off, so to speak, the lengthiness and trashiness of Jesuit plays.

Already in 1780 the Oberammergauers asked Father Magnus Knipfelberger, a priest then living at Ettal, to simplify Father Rosner's text. In one of the preceding paragraphs I mentioned the susceptibility of the Ammergauers as to good style, and it is very likely that this susceptibility was even more pronounced in former times when the training of the middle ages was still telling on them.

It is easy to imagine, therefore, that the style of Rosner's work with all its misplaced bombast could not appeal to the simple minds of the villagers in the long run. The text of 1800 is already much simpler in its essence. The allegoric figures do not take part any longer in the action itself, they only accompany the main text with some comment, grouping around the play like arabesques more or less. The number of persons too is diminished, — in other words a transformation takes place as we may observe it frequently at the going out of Barock style, the more sober forms of Empire becoming predominant.

Finally, in the years from 1810 to 15, the great revulsion from the middle ages to modern times takes place, the revulsion from the puffy altiloquence of Jesuit plays to the pure style of modern dramatisation. What Father Ottmar Weiss (who was a son of the Bavarian mountains himself) has achieved in re-writing the play ranks just as high above the mediaeval mystery-plays as it does above the Jesuit art of Father Rosner.

We may confess, though, that some trifles were taken over into the outward form of the play, for example Rosner's tutelar genii; but against that it must be stated that just these latter were not altogether an invention of Rosner's. The prologus (the mediator between action and audience) as well as the explanatory figures of the angels certainly formed part of the mediaeval play, representing some kind of a simplified antique choir then.

If we dissolve Father Ottmar Weiss' text into its main ingredients we clearly may discern three different elements.

First of all we find him possessed of an independent dramatic power following its own clearly defined lines with a sure instinct and extracting from the Gospel what seems best fit, making use of it in a very skilful way.

If any modern dramatist had written scenes of so dramatic a passion as the entry of Christ into Jerusalem amidst the people waving palm-branches, as the stormy, fanatic scenes before the crucifixion, — scenes which are not to be found on any wordly stage — we would not hesitate to name such an author among the best writers of modern dramatic literature. As it is, these scenes are the work of a simple peasant's son of Bayersoyen, a simple country-priest of Jesenwang whose refined education and spiritual training still base on a foundation of primitive force, passion, and naiveté. What Ottmar Weiss gave us is not the learnedness of studies but the vigorous feeling of the German people.

Contrary to all former texts Weiss does not introduce Christ as a sufferer at the beginning. First he shows Him as the King of Honours, as the Messiah hailed by the enthusiastic people — in order to show these same people in all their miserable inconstancy later on. The contrast between this triumphant entry and the later abandonment is a dramatic masterpiece worthy, according to my opinion, of no less a poet than Shakespeare.

The second element that distinctly becomes apparent in this new text is the mediaeval one, no matter what may be said against it. When speaking of the old passion-text I already called attention to the fact that certain traits of it have maintained their relationship to the text of today. We encounter clearly defined details that went over from the old text into the new one. The events at Bethany, Christ's farewell to His mother, re-written as they are in prose, are almost literally copied from the mediaeval play. The tendency to show that the chief agitators against Christ were the tradespeople of the temple, — the character of Pilate not being changed at all, — the typical figures of the disciples, — all this belongs to the play of the middle ages. The Christ of today as well as Peter and Judas are now impersonated as they were in the course of the centuries. Even if they do not speak to us in their old language, even if the old rhymery had to leave its place to a simple, popular prose, their roles are written in harmony with the oldest pattern in existence. The external appearance of the actors even seems to be in accordance with this model of old.

The third component of Weiss' text is what the author took over from the Jesuit play, purely formal things like the use of living pictures, the augmenting of the choir, the grouping of the actors, &c. All that, however, is made use of in a fully original and independent manner so that it may truly be considered a new creation of Father Ottmar Weiß'.

It would be a gross injustice to deprive the passion-play of its popular charm. Just as the Oberammergauers never were peasants in the ordinary sense of the word they were, on the other hand, always on a mental level that enabled them to be the authors of their own play. The passion-text was always written to their order, it had to be submitted to the community, and it was the latter that approved of it. We know that Father Ottmar Weiß remodelled the text of 1811 following a request by the members of the community; likewise Dedler, the teacher, re-composed the music. Thus the passion of 1815 was performed in a new, refined, and improved form*).

If Trautmann sees nothing in the passion-village's stage but "the stage of renaissance transplanted to Old Bavaria by the Jesuits",

*) This text of 1815, written by Father Ottmar Weiß' own hand, was discovered at Fürstenfeldbruck by Ferdinand Feldigl, a headmaster. He edited it in a beautiful volume which is a highly interesting contribution to passion-play literature. Its title is „Monuments of Passion-Literature", Copyright Uhlschmidt, Oberammergau.

there is something in that statement that must not be rejected right away. But if Trautmann thinks he finds a somewhat far-fetched resemblance between the Teatro Olimpico at Vicenza, the theatre of Andrea Pozzo, a Jesuit father of Rome, and the passion-stage of Oberammergau, it would only prove that all the three of them date back to antiquity. In his article on the Oberammergau passion-play of 1840 Guido Görres very positively proves that antiquity had exercised a considerable influence upon the spiritual spectacles of the first Christian aera. We are told that in the 4th century Gregor of Nazianz (the author of "Suffering Christ") admits himself that he took Euripides for a model when writing his passion-play. In his clever essay Görres furthermore reports that in 1436 the arena of a Roman Amphitheater at Bourges, France, was reconstructed to be a two-story, roofed Christian Amphitheater; instead of pagan fighting-games, the Acts of the Apostles would be performed there.

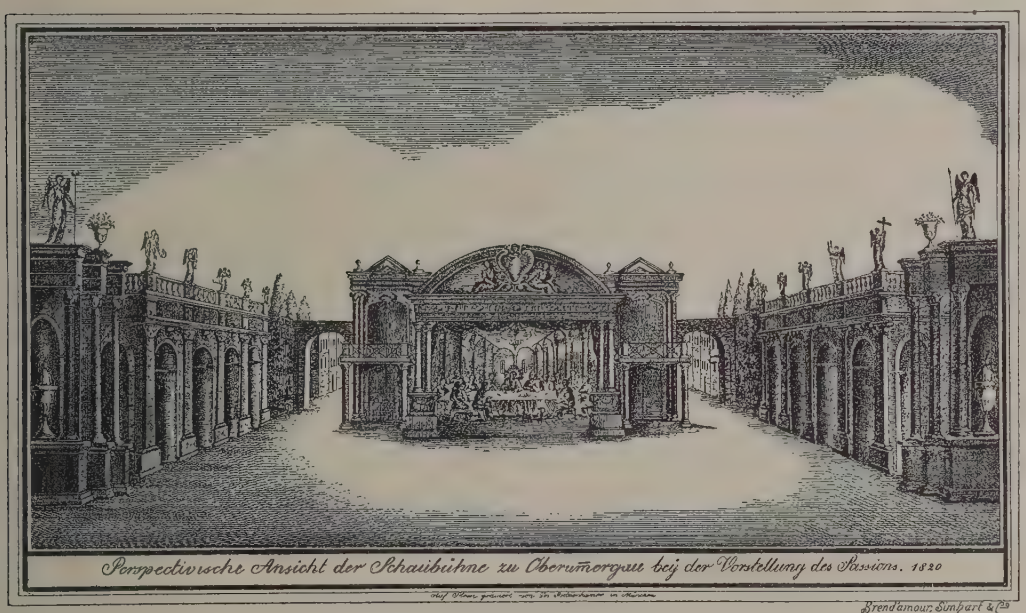
Similar things may have happened in Italy and Germany. Just as the meditative discussions of the prologus or the explaining angels are to be considered remnants of the antique chorus, thus in the division of the stage itself antique influences may have been of importance, especially in a city like Augsburg whose artistic and commercial life was in constant touch with Italy throughout the middle ages. Moreover, it must not be forgotten that both, the learned clergy in the Benedictine monasteries of those times as well as the Jesuits of later times were very familiar with examples of antiquity.

It is a fact that the arrangement of the old passion-stage was based on the same principles as that of the actual stage. Even a series of scenic details are of mediaeval origin. With respect to the breaking of the bones, the descent from the cross, &c., we still have a lot of scenic directions that are exemplary up till now. There is no doubt that a precise traditional code for all scenes of the play existed at Ammergau, a code of directions that was handed down from parents to children and grandchildren, up to the present day. The spear for example with which the Roman captain pierces Christ's chest (which even nowadays is admired on account of its clever mechanism) was minutely described nearly 3 centuries ago; it was hollow and had to be filled with a red liquid so as to give one the impression of blood. Just this clinging to the old details convinces me that the whole division of the stage goes back to those times too.

According to the text of St. Ulric and Afra we are led to believe that the houses of Pilate and Caiaphas were some sort of open halls into the depths of which one could see. It might have been difficult, however, to understand the speakers in them, and so later on a kind of verandah was erected at both sides that rested on pillars. This is what we see on a picture of 1820, the breaking of the staff, the pronouncing of judgement, &c., taking place high above the heads of the crowd below. In later times — when the original style of early empire became more sober still, when the pointed gable was set up and the whole arrangement was approaching false antiquity — the beautiful broad verandahs were replaced by narrow balconies affording very little space for the actors to appear on them. Only in 1890 the latter were substituted by suitable, elevated terraces. Architectural reasons were never taken into consideration, although Trautmann insists on seeing in the arrangement the "motive of an archway framed by columns with a balcony above", an arrangement very common with Jesuit buildings.

As proved by existing communal accounts, the Ammergau stage was erected solely and exclusively by the Ammergauers themselves. Judging by the incredibly low expenses up

to 1811, it cannot have been anything but a wooden frame-work of boards fitted out with some decorative ornaments. A theatre having a rich architectural make-up would not have paid anyhow considering the rareness of the performances. Even in 1800 there were only five performances altogether; in 1790 the price for the first seats was left to the spectators' discretion; for the second rank tickets, twelve cruitzers, were not come into question. Not the slightest reference is made as to the employment of foreign builders or subworkers. The lumber for the stage was taken from the communal forests, cut into shape by Ammergau carpenters, and painted by Ammergau painters. Nowhere the slightest traces of foreign elements are to be found. Something there is, however, that tends to show the conservativism of the Ammergau people: The com-



Passion Theatre in the year 1820.
From an old lithograph.

charged; and the price of the third was six cruitzers. In 1701 the expenditures for the passion-play amounted to about 60 florins: "12 florins and 30 cruitzers being paid to Bernhard Steinle for rehearsing and directing the passion-tragedy; 19 florins to Sebastian Würmser and Martin Faistenmantel, painters, for wages and colours; 10 florins to the actors, so that they might have a drink in accordance with the traditional custom; 2 florins to the trumpeters of Ettal, as a honorarium; and 12 cruitzers for gun-powder." It is evident that any costly architecture does

mercial relations of Ammergau follow the same direction as in the middle ages, to the free imperial city of Augsburg that is.

It is this peculiarity that permits us to draw our conclusions as to the influences that were exercised upon the passion-play. The threads of artistic and commercial relations do not lead to Munich, the city of Italian operas and gorgeous Jesuit plays, on the contrary — with the exception of music-paper and silver lace for the costumes — everything is bought in Suavia. Schongau, Landsberg, Augsburg, and once in a while

Nuremberg too are the furnishers of cloth and trimmings for the passion-play. Until the first half of the 19th century it was an almost sanctified custom to have everything come from Augsburg.

At the time when Father Rosner's play was performed, the theatre — as it was used since 1850 — did not exist yet, says Trautmann. This and the facts related in the foregoing paragraph led me to think that the stage (the typical Jesuit stage, as Trautmann characterises it!) did not come into existence before the last century. Very probably it was built in connection with Ottmar Weiß' remodelling of the text. If the simple building of the theatre was sufficient to get up Rosner's performance with all its sumptuous decorations, it did not look probable that the same stage would not do for Knipfelberger's simplified tragedy, especially as just in these times continuous wars and a constant lack of money added their weight to the difficulties of the play. My opinion was strengthened when looking at a picture of 1820 showing the theatre in the purest of empire styles. I now examined the communal accounts as to the expenditures for the passion-play of 1790. But nowhere the slightest item could be found that would point towards a possible reconstruction of the theatre. We find entries concerning the purchase of lumber, boards, nails, &c.; wages for painters, lock-smiths, and carpenters are mentioned. There is the remark that invariably reappears in the accounts of every passion-

Passion Theatre in the year 1850.

year: "Expenditures for fitting up churchyard, fence, and wall." We find the honoraries for all the actors, even the honorarium of Dedler, the teacher: "53 florins for composing the passion-music." However, there was nothing to indicate that anything had been reconstructed in the theatre itself. I was on the point of giving it up when, in an almost illegible, hastily written account of 1815, I suddenly found the following entry: "41 florins paid to Mr. H. H. Fruhmess-Benefiziatus for laying out the plan of the passion-theatre and painting same." And in the 1820 accounts another item appears: "To H. H. Fruhmess-Benefiziatus Nicol Unhoch

of this place the sum of 25 florins was given as a supplementary payment for his constructing work, done in 1815." Now all was clear to me. This also explained the strangely idealised picture of the passion-theatre of 1820 which probably had been sketched on stone following directly the plan of Unhoch.

Said Benefiziatus Unhoch was the descendant of an old Oberammergau artists' family and was born in the passion-village in 1762. After a long stay in Württemberg he became curate at Inkofen and Bergkirchen (Bavaria) and in 1801 he was given the mass-benefice at Ammergau. Daisenberger praises him as a man of refined education and a lot of practical knowledge. He introduced the Sunday-School at Oberammergau and founded a school for drawing. He taught people the rearing of bees and gave lessons in the culture of fruit-trees. He also designed the plan for a new school-house; later on it was erected under his management, — after the Ammergau musicians had renounced to a little capital that was due to them out of a donation pious Priest Daser had made in their favour. It was owing to his influence that these musicians decided to play in church without getting any payment for it. The house of matins having burnt down in 1817, he reconstructed that too, but on account of the rights of ownership he got into a quarrel with the community. So he finally had himself transferred to Garmisch. His wish — to die at Ammergau — was not to come true. He passed away at Garmisch in 1833 as the Benefiziatus of St. Nicholas' Church there.

Passion Theatre in the year 1860.
From the painting in the Gregori Chapel at Oberammergau.

His autobiography has been preserved in the acts of the benefice's archives; the following passage throws a light upon the building of the new theatre:

"In 1815 the community wanted to perform the passion-play, and so the committee asked me to direct the constructing of a new theatre. Yielding to the many requests that were made in this respect I finally took charge of this most important matter. I designed the plan, made a little model, and in October I began to build. Before the

winter came I had managed to get through with the foundation. Throughout the winter the carpenters were busy on the churchyard, the joiners were at work in the communal barn, and the painters were working in the upper room of Hansjörgenwirt (the inn). This work lasted till Whitsuntide and I had to be up at the theatre by 6 every morning, so as to direct the men there. I will not speak of the many vexations and chicanes I was given. As I had given my word I could not very well break it, and so I carried on for the sake of the thing itself. At the end of it all I was paid 3 Karolins for the trouble I had taken. Horresco referens! And that in spite of the fact that I had taken all the responsibility on my shoulders. Some connoisseurs from Munich and Augspurg, however, highly praised me and approved of the theatre. But the Ammergauers were not very pleased with it. Why?"

I imagine the matter to have been as follows: The old three-parted stage, the existence of which I proved for the mediaeval plays, had prohably been rejected by Father Rosner, the refined Viennese; very likely he thought it to be something old-fashioned and rustic and did not want to have it used for his revised text. When Father Ottmar Weiß remodelled the text again, the necessity of a new division of the stage became more urgent than ever. Probably the stage was technically altered and enlargened already in 1811, at the time when Father Ottmar Weiß personally conducted the rehearsals. In the passion-accounts there is a remark: "Fares for Father Otmair, who was several times given a drive from Ettal to Oberammergau and back, so as to rehearse the play: 4 florins, 36 cruitzers." The expenditures were pretty high that time and it seems likely that preparations were made to give the stage a better and more beautiful architecture later on.

As already mentioned, Father Ottmar with great piety chose the oldest passion-text for the basis of his text. Thus it is not surprising that the old arrangement of the stage appeared to be the most desirable to him. Before Father Ottmar was able to get his work up on the stage, however, he was transferred to Jesenwang as a curate, in 1812. This did not prevent him from remodelling his passion-play once more and he always remained in touch with his beloved Ammergau. The communal accounts of 1815 mention travelling expenses for a delegation sent to Jesenwang. No doubt, these people wanted to ask Father Weiß' advice concerning some affair of their passion-play. At any rate, he himself appointed Benefiziatus Unhoch his representant at the passion-play, approving at the same time of the latter's design for a new theatre.

When looking into Ottmar Weiß' passion-text it becomes clear to us that any other arrangement on the stage is out of question. Scenes rapidly following each other, choir and action alternately commanding the stage, masses of people having to be grouped so as to impress the spectators, — all that requires an arrangement of the kind that was made. The grand effect of that scene where Pilate appears on the balcony high above the crowds of fanaticized rabble would not be possible if the action took place on the ground. Father Ottmar Weiß, the great dramatist, felt that very well, and so it is his artistic feeling that was responsible for the erection of the verandahs as shown on the picture of 1820. As regards the costumes of the passion-play, Trautmann holds the opinion that they were taken from the wardrobes of processions and Jesuit plays. He may be right in this assertion, for up till 1820 the community was in possession of costumes for the leading actors only, whereas the garments for the masses, the Roman soldiers, &c., were borrowed from

monasteries, municipalities, or corporations. In the 17th century they were mostly borrowed at Schongau or Rothenbuch. Later on too, there is always an item in the accounts for the loan of costumes, for example in 1790 it says: "2 men sent to Ettal to fetch the clothes. Wages and meals: 1 florin, 60 cruitzers."

In 1815 the purchase of a number of stage-properties is mentioned, probably conditioned by the new construction of the theatre.

From 1830 on the notes as to borrowing articles do not appear any longer. Caused by the greater success of the play the community probably decided to have a passion-wardrobe of its own. Perhaps some clothes were bought from the wardrobe of a former Jesuit theatre. Others may have been tailored after the pattern of borrowed costumes. Thus there would be some influence of Jesuit plays after all. The relation between them and the Oberammergau passion-play, however, is a purely accidental one, one that happened so to speak. It has no more to do with the play itself than the prevalence of those terrible dark-blue tailed coats and white trousers that used to be worn for a while by the Oberammergau village-musicians. A little tastelessness now and then happened to be carried into the passion-village, some misunderstood fashion occasionally was followed for a while in order to be given up again in no time.

Thus the tutelar genii for a time wore what used to be called an islander's headgear. This too was only a passing fashion, for before and after that time the pictures show them wearing an altogether different costume. To sum up my investigations, I think I have made plain two points: first, the connection of the actual passion-play with the popular mediaeval play of the 15th century; second, the certainty that the actual passion-stage was erected in the 19th century, following the pattern of the mediaeval stage. It may be said therefore that Rosner's Jesuit play was but an ingrafted sprig that withered after a short while whilst the vigorous trunk grew on in the same direction, up to the present day.

The old passion-accounts, by the way, give us a good idea as to how everything was carried out. First of all they clearly prove that up to 1830 the passion-play was performed on the churchyard. For that purpose the surrounding fence and the wall had to be pulled down every time, the premises being enlargened by making use of the neighbouring grounds too. To serve as a dressing-house for the actors, the cottage of one Jakob Haag was rented, probably a building that was close by. We learn that Christ was entitled to have a room "of his own". A large expenditure always arose from payments to be made to the necessary guards of public safety. Thus we read in 1811:

"Expenditures for the commissary of H. M. Provincial Court of Justice at Schongau: To the right honourable assessors — 8 plays extending over 21 days — 3 fl. 30 cr. per day — amounts to 73 florins 30 cruitzers altogether. To the Court's beadle, 21 days at 1 fl. each — 21 florins."

Follow the bills for board and lodging of these guards. In brief, this form of police-surveillance meant an expenditure of 219 fl. 53 cr. to the community. This is a nice little sum if one takes into consideration that the total proceeds of the passion-play amounted only to 1538 fl., which sum was just big enough to cover all the expenses.

All sorts of interesting things may be found in these old accounts. For example in 1790 we read: "To Rev. Innozenz, also of Unterammergau, for all the pains he took: 4 fl. 48 cr. A tip to the curate's cook: 27 cruitzers."

In the same year's accounts we also come across an item: "24 cruitzers for pomatum to dress the hair."

In 1811 it says: "To Rochus Lang, for gluing the beards to the actors' faces, and other similar services: 45 cruitzers for each play, total 6 fl." Further on: "To Christ, for knitted fleshings, 7 fl. 12 cr."

"To the two thieves, 4 yards of white cloth, 4 fl. 48 cr."

Simon: 14 fl. 42 cr." And: "To Johann Dedler, innkeeper and butcher, for the joints eaten at the Lord's Supper (on account): 10 fl. 23 cr."

The donkey for the play and the gunpowder for the little mortars used to be furnished by Unterammergau: "For a loan

Members of the High Council. (Passion Play 1850.)

"To Mr. Georg Luybold, prompter, for the great pains he took: 11 fl." How primitive everything was is shown by the large quantities of sheep's wool that were purchased from the peasants. Partly this wool was used for beards, partly for trimming the clothes.

In 1820 we read: "To Sarah Bierling, for preparing the meals for the scene with

of the donkey that was used for the entry into Jerusalem, all plays together: 9 fl. 36 cr."

In 1820 the curate of Ettal took part as a musician. He got 14 fl. 47 cr. for fares. Besides that it says: "To Nicholas Niklas, innkeeper at Unterammergau, payment for 4 liters of red Alsatian wine which were given as a present to the curate of Ettal for his assistance in the orchestra: 2 fl. 40 cr."

In 1830 the passion-play entered a new phase. It was transferred from the narrow churchyard to its present site. The reason for this transfer was an interdict by the curate of that time, Aloys Plutz, who did not suffer it to be performed on the churchyard. Immediately the dimensions of the passion-theatre grew larger. Probably it was transfigured in a way that much of the arrangement could be maintained later on. The pointed gables and the narrow balconies are already there. Roofed boxes were built for the first time. There is little of interest in the accounts of that year, save perhaps a bill for "36 apples painted on cardboard". No doubt they were hung to the tree in Paradise.

Very interesting again are the accounts of 1840. At the time of Magistrate Michael Diemer the passion-play seems to have risen up enormously. Judging from what Clerical Councillor Daisenberger used to say, as well as from the tales of old people who knew him, Diemer must have been a highly talented passion-player and a broad-minded magistrate too. His talent for music was remarkable and his voice made him the best leader of the choir for the last 50 years. As regards both, voice and acting, he is said to have even surpassed his son Johann.

Under his management the theatre was notably improved. We read "for renovating the boxes and the theatre"; to "Alois Lechner, for making new boxes and stairs"; "for gravelling the roads to the theatre"; to "Mr. H. Frankl, surgeon to the Royal Court at Munich, for 22 gilt edged programs de luxe, bound in silk (his disbursement): 44 florins." A spirit of luxury suddenly got hold of the Ammergauers, as we see.

A fine work of charity is also contained in the communal accounts: an invitation to the inmates of the Munich institution for the deaf and dumb to attend the passion-play and be entertained at the expense of the community. A rather expensive affair that was, for the books show: "36½ pounds of veal at 9 cruitzers each, and 31½ pounds of beef at 9 cr. each, beer, and bread." In spite of all these expenditures (and although the management of that year is characterized by a certain touch of sumptuousness) the proceeds amounted to 16,239 fl. 48 cr., whereas the expenditures were only 12,146 fl. 49 cr. Thus a surplus of 4092 fl. 59 cr. remained. This money, it seems, was deposited at H. M. Court of Justice, for we read: "To Michael Diemer, magistrate, and Martin Kirchmaier, corporate officer, for bringing a deposit of 4000 fl. to H. M. Court of Justice (by carriage) 2 days' allowance including a disbursement of 36 cr.: 4 fl. 36 cr." Pretty combinations often occur in the accounts, thus "19 cruitzers for buying a new drum-string" are simply added to the diets of a magistrate who went to Munich in order to invite H. M. the King. Or in one item: "To Creszenz Maier, for washing the clothes of Christ and the two thieves, and disbursement for the accommodation of the Royal Gendarmes, together: 8 fl. 43 cr."

Something very interesting that could be ascertained by these accounts of 1840 is the fact that a great deal of costumes were bought at Kohlgrub. These costumes, however, were probably not made at Kohlgrub itself but were bought from the dealers there who had got them at Mittenwald. At Kohlgrub a passion-play had been performed, but only once, in 1748. 64 persons took part in it and the text (which had been furnished by Polling Monastery) was all taken from the Weilheim passion-play by Johann Aelbl. Very likely the costumes had come from Polling too. At Mittenwald, however, even in 1834 a passion-play was performed, the text of which was following the outlines of Weiß's play; the music had been composed by a Munich musician named Leibl. They could not keep up their pas-

sion-play there, as it seems, for it was discontinued after that time and the costumes were sold.

Thus we read in the 1840 accounts:

"Febr. 20. — For the costumes and stage-properties bought from Joh. Mich. Mangold

Mary. (Passion Play 1850.)

and M. Burkhart, both of Kohlgrub, including cartage to Oberammergau 356 fl. 32 cr.

Febr. 21. — To Joh. Burkhart, for conveying the costumes and stage-properties from Mittenwald to Oberammergau, 4 loads at 6 fl. 30 cr. each, and including tips 26 fl. 40 cr."

It is to be supposed that a part of the Mittenwald costumes had been bought at cheap prices by the Kohlgrub dealers who then sold them to Oberammergau whereas the remainder later on was purchased directly from Mittenwald. For we read that "Anton Lang, corporate officer, was given 2 days' diets at 2 fl. 30 cr. each (total 5 fl.) for a journey to Mittenwald to superintend the transportation of stage-properties."

I now conclude my researches into the communal accounts. Those of 1840 are the clearest among them and I must confess that I got a very favourable impression of grandfather Diemer's magistrateship. We are still informed of the use that was made of that surplus of 4000 fl.: "1000 fl. for paying off communal debts; 1000 fl. for fitting out the church; 400 fl. for building a poor-house; 500 fl. for building a communal barn to house the lumber for the stage."

The rest was added to the emergency-fund of the Elementary School in case it should become necessary to employ an assistant-teacher, &c.

Ammergau had now attained to historical importance and its passion-play had become a force strong enough to move all the world.

Quite interesting are the judicial conditions from 1790 to 1840. The head-lines of the first accounts run as follows:

"Passion-Accounts

for the year of the Lord 1790 which were shown (with due submissiveness) to a most gracious Court of Judicature (by the magistrate of the community)." This "Court of Judicature" is of course Ettal.

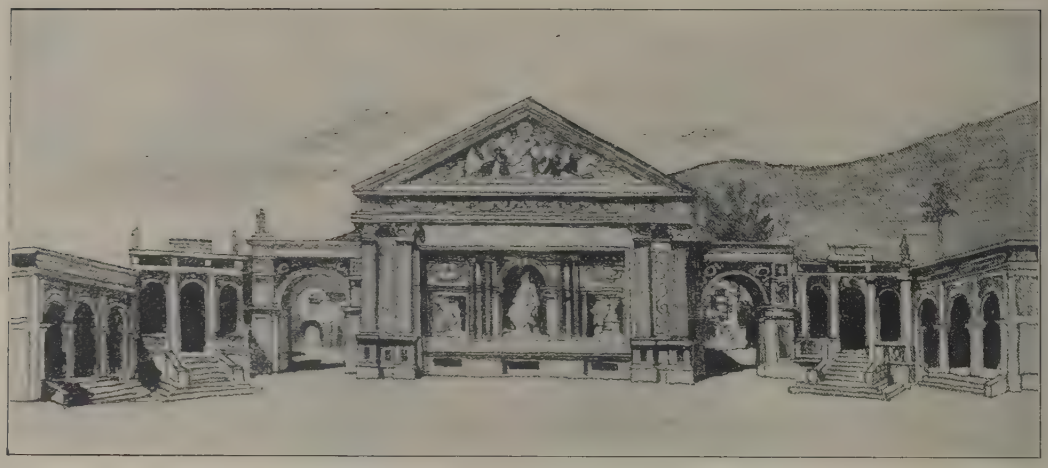
In 1811 and 1815 the accounts were submitted for inspection to the Court of Justice at Schongau (to which district Ammergau was to belong later on) and in 1830 they were examined by the Court of Justice at Werdenfels.

In 1845 Mr. Aloys Daisenberger was made curate of Oberammergau, a highly cultured gentleman who proved to be of greatest importance to the village. From that time until his death he was the leader and bene-

volent friend of the passion-play and the first thing he did was to revise Ottmar Weiß's text. As he states in an article written in 1850, he confined himself "to shorten some lengthy passages, eliminating occasional obsolete words or drastic expressions. For several reasons the text of the hymns was not altered at all; the hymn-books were printed in accordance with those of 1840. A few passages were omitted and the scene of Job was accompanied by music too." These are Daisenberger's own words.

We shall speak of this man later on, for his work was too important to pass it by so quickly. The one thing, however, that must n o t be said about him is that he was a remodeller of the passion-text. As he said himself, he did n o t alter anything in the idea of the text; his feeling of piety towards Weiß, his teacher, was far too great for that. His alterations (including those he made in the sixties) were always confined to the hymns. He improved the verse of some of them, shortening several scenes and substituting better phrases for old ones. But it was never an original work of his own that he produced nor even a remodelling in the strict sense of the word. Besides the songs it is especially the prologue that was put into a somewhat nobler shape by him. The prose too became more comprehensible owing to his modern language. Just because he was a true poet himself, who felt an innate respect for the product of his fellow-genius, just for that reason he put so wise a restriction on his literary activities. His revised text has proved to be the best one until this day and none of the numerous passion-texts would-be poets tried to urge on the Ammergauers came ever near the beauty of that Weiß-Daisenberger text.

Magdalene. (Passion Play 1850.)



The Passion Theatre till 1922. View on the Stage.

Three Heroes of the Passion-Play

The passion-play has its heroes and its martyrs, and it would be difficult to determine where heroism ends and where martyrdom begins, — with these men. There is a touch of antiquity to that tragic heroism of the poor woodcarver who at the end of the passion-play resignedly takes off the purple of the Nazarene or the armour of the Roman and, whilst the applause of an enthusiastic audience is still ringing in his ears, returns to the drudgery of every-day life, to the daily fight with the wolf at the door. Has not such a man something of a martyr about him? And Ottmar Weiß, the lone Benedictine, mourning on the place of his former activities, is he not a figure to remind us of Jeremiah on the ruins of Jerusalem? So grand in his resignation, so noble in his endeavours to use his power for the good of the little circle around him, — has he not something of a prophet in his nature? Just as Jeremiah sang his immortal lamentations he, the homeless, sings the high anthem of love everlasting, the song of eternal suffering, forgetting his own grief at the sight of the world-redeeming sufferings of the Saviour. (If he is not a hero greater than any of antiquity I must confess I do not understand anything of real greatness.)

And the poor school-teacher whose soul was full of heavenly melodies, the modest man in his humble station of life who was an artist with every thread of his being, — what about him? Opinions may be divided as to the value of the passion-music he composed; one thing, however, cannot be denied and that is that it is on the level of r e a l a r t. If this poor innkeeper's son had had the chance to get an education at Munich, who knows whether we might not find him among the classics of his time? As it was, his genius was confined to devoting his forces to his beloved native village for which — in the prime of his life — he died of consumption, poverty and want.

Just ponder a while on the lots of these people, ye gentlemen who look at the passion-play with idle curiosity, criticising on the way home and talking in your studies

about the text and the music and about how much better you would have made everything if you had set to work. Did you ever hear of that old fable which says that the builders of old used to mix blood into their mortar so as to give their buildings a firm hold? Well, the mortar that built the passion-work and preserved it until to-day did contain heart's blood: The heart's blood of poverty, — the heart's blood of misunderstood artists who never found recognition, — the heart's blood of love for the poor native country and for the mother unable to offer her child anything but a crust of bread. To these poor artists' souls too the Lord said: "Come unto me all ye who are laden and burdened"; and they came and offered their first works and He accepted and consecrated them to His service. The right to be an Ammergauer and to take part in the sacred work always had to be paid for by blood and tears. Woe to him who would offer his cooperation out of the unclean motives of speculative frivolity!! The very building would have to fall down on him and smash him, — the building that was founded by the forefathers to serve a sacred purpose!

There is that simple country-curate, venerable old Daisenberger, who renounced to the dignity of a bishop and to an honourable political career only in order to cultivate a little vineyard in the hearts of his fellow-villagers, — in order to devote all his energy to this his beloved mountain-country. A modern Cincinnatus, if you like, for indeed he combined philosophical contentedness with the devout spirit of Christian love.

Father Ottmar Weiß, Rochus Dedler, the teacher, and Curate Daisenberger are the last representants of old monastic culture. As if dying monasticism had wanted to bless the country once more, it left Oberammergau an inheritance through these three men, a benefit for many generations to come.

The biographies of Father Weiß and Rochus Dedler are quoted from the collective work by Dr. Martin von Deutinger, cathedral-provost at Munich.

They have been written by contemporaries and so they are doubly valuable to us. The biography of Ottmar Weiß appeared for the first time in Floßmann und Heißler's "Deutscher Schulbote", page 68. (The following are somewhat shortened but otherwise literal quotations.)

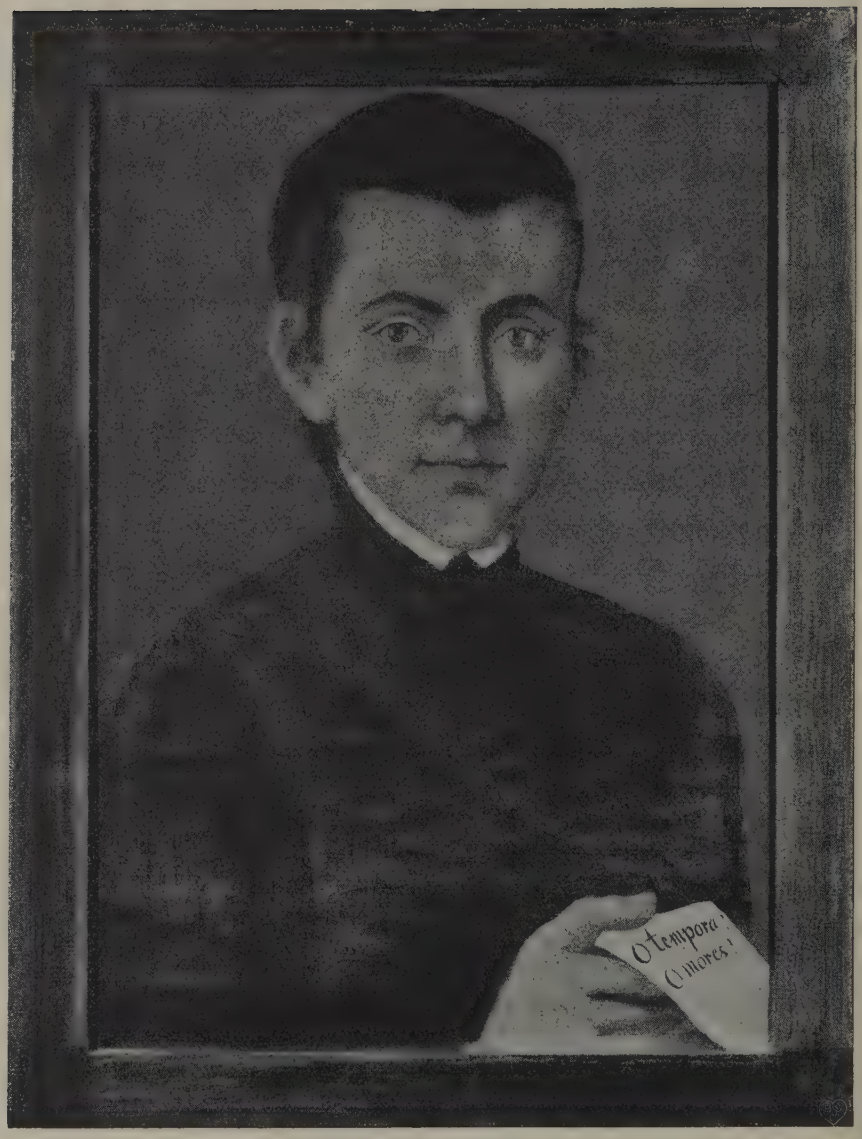
Father Ottmar Weiß, conventual of the monastery of Ettal

"In the person of Ottmar Weiß the last conventual of the once famous Benedictine monastery of Ettal has gone to the grave.

Ottmar Weiß was born on April 24th, 1769, in the village of Bayersoyen that now belongs to the district of the Court of Justice of Schongau. Formerly this place was subject to the jurisdiction of Ettal Monastery. When he was christened he got the name of the saint on whose day he had been born. After attending the elementary school at Ettal he went to Munich to continue his studies at the college there. On leaving that college he returned immediately to Ettal and asked to be admitted into the order of the Benedictines. In order to impress on him the example he was expected to follow he was given the name of Ottmar at his profession, — the name of a worthy abbot who had died a few years ago.

Before long he was sent to Ingolstadt to study the higher faculties of science there. He applied himself to these studies with great zeal and when they had come to an end he returned to the monastery as a Doctor of Philosophy.

On September 19th, 1795, Ottmar was ordained a priest. From now on his whole life was devoted to his studies as a teacher and spiritual father.



Father Ottmar Weiß.
From an old oil-painting.

He was given a fine sphere of activity when Alphons, his abbot, sent him to Eschenloh, a little village situated at the entrance of the Alps and on the banks of Loysach River. Both, mentally and bodily strong, this young priest was just the right man to be the vicar of these robust mountaineers.

By the secularisation of the monasteries in 1803, however, his work there was rudely interrupted. Painfully grieved, Father Ottmar took leave of Eschenloh amidst the tears and lamentations of his parishioners. Even now the old people of Eschenloh remember with venerating love their kind spiritual father.

He returned to Ettal to live as a pensioner in the beloved cell he had occupied in happier days gone by. The other friars having left, he and a few of his friends remained there to lament on the ruins of desolate Jerusalem. And yet, this energetic man was unable to live on in inactivity. No work being given to him, he looked out for work himself. And soon he found an occupation for which he was extremely well fit.

In the little village of Oberau no real school had been established yet and the children got their only training from good-natured peasants who tried hard to teach them what little knowledge they had themselves. During winter-time some schoolmaster was hired but even then the teaching did not amount to much. This was the work Father Ottmar decided to take up. In 1804 he took charge of the school there and made Oberau his permanent residence. Thus he was not far from his beloved Ettal at any rate.

For about three years he was the leader of the school at Oberau. He then changed his program inasmuch as he opened up a school of his own in his cell for boys who would come daily to visit him there as well as for others who would board at Ettal for this purpose. Among the pupils of this private school was the writer*) of this article who had been taught by Father Ottmar at the Oberau public school, right up from the ABC. It was he by whom he was encouraged to take up his studies at college later on.

During the years when Father Ottmar gave lessons in public as well as in private schools he did not neglect his duties as a spiritual father. Most of the general sermons at Ettal were held by him and all of the Lent-sermons. It was noticed that pilgrimage to Ettal increased as long as he was there; after his departure, however, it notably decreased.

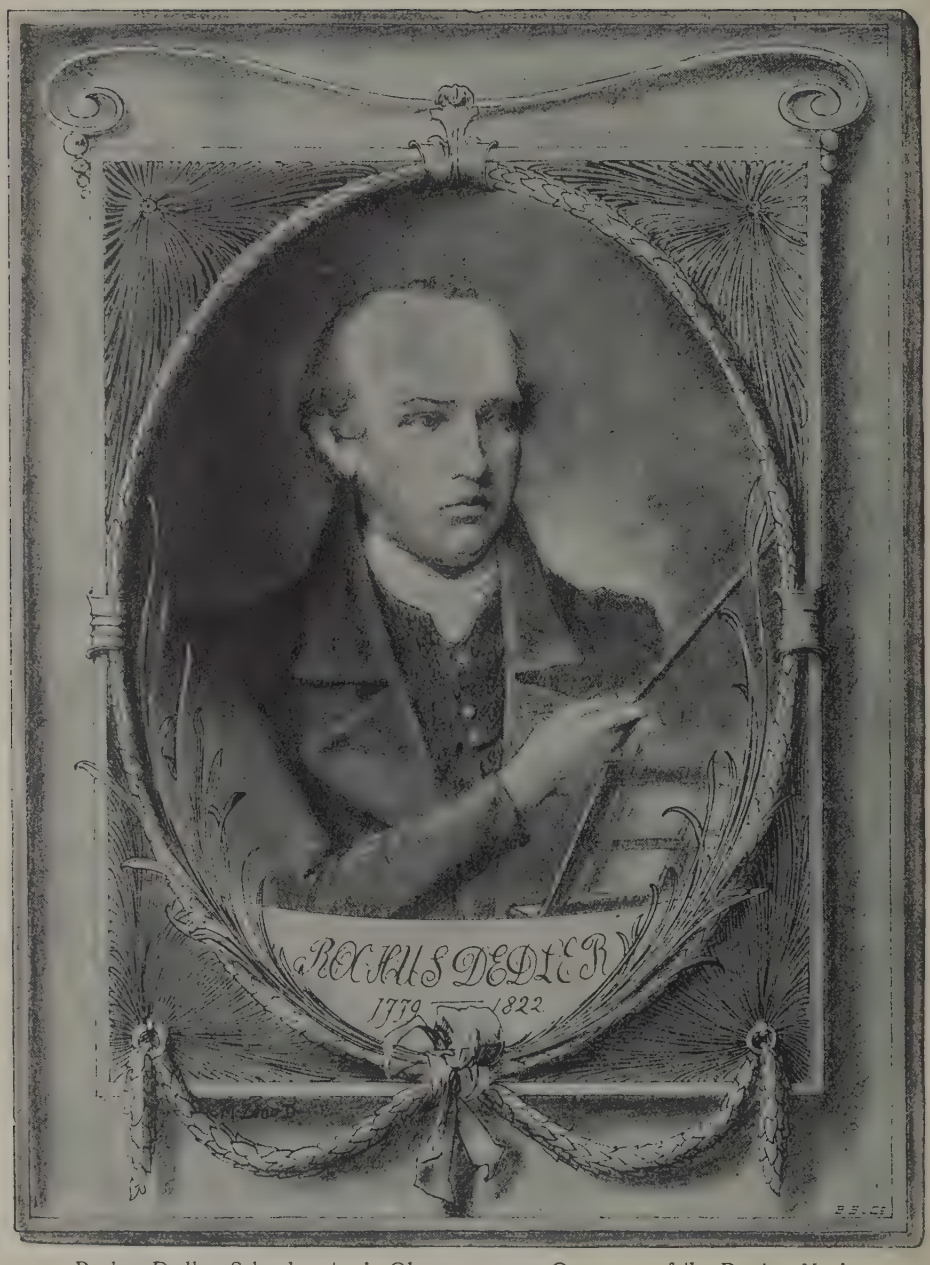
*) J. A. Daisenberger himself.

During the times of war he often found an occasion to be of service to the inhabitants of the former monastery's estates. He was always willing and eager to help wherever it was possible. Whenever soldiers would be quartered in the village he showed great personal courage and when the French marched through the country his profound knowledge of their language proved to be an appreciable help to the whole community. The Tyrolian rebels (who frequently invaded the Ammer Gau in 1809) highly respected this pious monk who had never ceased to wear his Benedictine's habit.

To his divers occupations another one was added in 1810, when Herr von Elbing (then Postmaster General, later on Councillor of the Ministry) purchased from the Royal Exchequer the monastery-building, the brewery, and the farm.

This gentleman asked him to take care of the management of the brewery and the farm, for he had realised that he could not find a better man for this position. Ottmar turned out to be such a competent manager that it was easy to see that the monastery — had it been permitted to continue its existence — would not only have had a professor in his person but a very efficient housekeeper too.

All that, however, meant no overwork to him. On the contrary, at that time he took up another work that would have been enough to require the whole of any other man's energy. When the people of Oberammergau made preparations to perform again the so-called passion-play (the tragedy showing the sufferings of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ) they asked Father Ottmar to re-write the text of their play, so that it might be better fit for presentation. The unrestricted praise that was given to the passion-play by catholics and protestants alike proves that he acquitted himself of this task in a truly splendid manner.



Rochus Dedler, Schoolmaster in Oberammergau, Composer of the Passion Music.

R. Dedler
1812.

Now the time came when he had to give up this retired life of his, that was so full of activity in all respects. At Unterammergau they needed a new priest and among many competitors he too applied for the position. He was made vicar of that village although he continued to reside at Ettal. On July 9th, 1812, he was given the parish of Jesenwang, which village belongs nowadays to the district of Bruck near Fürstenfeld.

Perfectly happy in the sphere of activity that was his, he never strove to rise up to higher positions. There would have been only one call that might have induced him to leave his beloved parish, and that would have been the call to go back to his monastery. A secret longing for his Ettal never left his heart.

Quite unexpectedly death knocked at his door. After a sudden fit of apoplexy he had just enough time left to prepare himself for his departure from this world and on January 26th, 1843, at the age of 72, he died. His body lies buried in the village of the people whose faithful guide he had been for over thirty years."

Rochus Dedler, Teacher at Oberammergau.

Rochus Dedler was born at Oberammergau on January 15th, 1779. He was the second son of an innkeeper. His first teacher was a worthy man by the name of Martin Michael Reichard who was so famous a musician that many children from distant parts of the country were sent to attend his lessons.

As these boys were not only taught reading and writing in this elementary school, but were trained in the principles of music too, many of them were welcomed in the neighbouring monasteries of Rothenbuch and Ettal.

That was the way Rochus Dedler was taken on as a singing-boy in Rothenbuch Monastery, whereas his elder brother Franz (later-on curate of Oberföhring near Munich) had been a chorister at Ettal.

After a short musical training at Rothenbuch Dedler continued his studies at the Munich seminary and soon became an accomplished vocalist. Owing to his great abilities he had been admitted to that institute free of charge, for he was utterly devoid of any earthly possessions. His irreproachable behaviour, his perseverance, and all his great gifts won him distinction everywhere. In his younger years he excelled as a treble-singer, but later on — especially at the Ammergau passion-plays — he roused general admiration by his mellifluous and yet forceful bass. All the connoisseurs of art, even H. R. H. the Duke of Leuchtenberg, bestowed praise upon him in a most enthusiastic manner. Dedler was an experienced musician all round. He played several instruments and was a master at playing the organ, knowing more about partition than anybody else. This stood him in good stead when teaching the many pupils that were entrusted to his care, all the more as there were very few people who had a good knowledge of partition then.

Dedler's knowledge manifested itself in various musical compositions. At the occasion of the triumphant entry into Munich of H. M. King Max Joseph I. in 1799, he even composed what would now be called a musical comedy. It met with great approval but, as far as we know, it was never performed in public. On the other hand, there are numerous compositions, partly printed, partly written by hand, that are well-known and eagerly sought after, e. g. Te Deum laudamus, mass, chantries, litanies, and above all the beautiful hymns and anthems for the Oberammergau passion-plays.

Although Dedler had a pronounced predilection for music he never neglected science. He had already finished his philosophical studies and was 20 years of age when he returned to his beloved Rothenbuch, undecided as to what profession he should choose.

Prior Herkulan Schwaiger was still living and he heartily welcomed the young man. He was so fond of him that he used to call him his son; the prebendaries too liked him and considered him their brother. This cordial reception so moved Dedler that he made up his mind to stay with the good Benedictines for the rest of his life. Dark clouds, however, were already gathering above the monasteries, foreboding a thunderstorm that would put an end to their existence. Rothenbuch, anticipating this danger, took great pains to procure our young friend a suitable and permanent position. Just at this time Martin Reichart, teacher, leader of the choir, and organist at Oberammergau, happened to die. (1802).

The community of Oberammergau, at their head the worthy curate of that place, offered this honourable position to Dedler, their country-man; they rejected many other applicants in his favour, assuring him at the same time that they would give him a salary of 400 florins per annum, payable monthly and in cash. Aside of that he was to be given free lodging as well as the use of some communal grounds.

Dedler did not think then that he would become a teacher. But as he was in a dilemma and did not know what profession to choose he thought this offer to be a regular godsend and accepted. Having commenced his duties he married Josepha, daughter of Andreas Sepp of Uffing, a former secretary to the exchequer and faldage-official. The wedding took place on November 22, 1802.

Far away from the world and its vices, in the quiet seclusion of his little mountain-village, this teacher of 23 years followed his calling with manly vigour, probity and cheerfulness. Guided by the ardent desire to do good to his fellow-parishioners he used all his rare gifts to their benefit.

Attracted by all that is beautiful and true, he sowed the seed of good wherever he went. In peaceful contentedness he watched the fruit of his labours grow and never tired of sacrificing himself for the welfare of those that were around him. The many over-exertions at school and in church, however, especially by speaking and singing, finally caused a lung-disease. Already in 1821 the first symptoms made their appearance; he began to vomit blood. The community of Oberammergau, highly appreciating the righteous, pious, and competent man, did all that was in their power to save his precious life. The doctors' prescriptions and the tender care he was given prolonged his life for one more summer. On his own request the patient had been sent to his brother's home at Oberföhring (where the latter was curate) so as to await his recovery in the somewhat milder climate of that village and to take a rest in the company of his mother and sister.

He was gladly received by his brother, the good Samaritan, who previously had already spent 2000 florins on the education of the teacher's eldest son. He made all possible efforts to save his dear brother, but it was in vain. Dedler died in the arms of his brother on October 15th, 1822. His last wish was that his son Johann (then 16 years of age) should become a teacher too, so as to be able to take care of the three minor children as soon as possible. That wish was fulfilled: Johann Dedler became an excellent teacher. He died at Munich on November 15th, 1850, at the age of 44 years and 11 months.

Clerical Councillor Alois Daisenberger Curate of Oberammergau.

Daisenberger — "a peasant's son" as he calls himself — was born in the neighbouring village of Oberau in 1799. Father Ottmar Weiß was his first teacher "from ABC up to college" — the 6th class of what we now would call "Gymnasium". When Father Ottmar Weiß was transferred to Jesenwang he joined Holland's Institute at Munich in order to continue his studies. At that time he became the intimate chum of the later Cardinal Reisach and made friends with Karl and Anselm Feuerbach, two brothers. Having carried away the first prize of that institution, he left college in 1816 in order to take up his studies at Landshut University. At first he dit not think of becoming a priest. A grave illness he went through in the summer of 1817, however, made him arrive at that decision. Joining "Gregorianum", a seminary for priests at Landshut, he studied at the university (besides theology) the history of philosophy, physics, natural science, and agronomy. In 1818 he received the lower ordinations and in 1820 he passed his final examinations. As he was too young to be raised to sacerdotal dignity he returned to his native village of Oberau. He gave primary lessons in the school there until a pontifical dispence enabled him to obtain the higher ordinations. He was ordained by the suffragan-bishop of Eichstädt, Felix von Stubenberg, and on October 21, 1821, he said his first mass on Kirchbichl Hill at Oberau, outside old St. Georg's Chapel. It was on a fine bright autumn-day and the gigantic mountains of Werdenfels country towered up into the sky like the sidewings of an immense altar. Father Ottmar Weiß held the first mass-sermon. Rochus Dedler had composed a special festival-mass for that day and it was performed by the singers and musicians of Oberammergau. In this hour, it seems, the young priest inherited the work of the dying artist, the wonderful spiritual teacher, and the spell of his native country fell on him. It was the call that later on made him curate of the passion-village.

Clerical Councillor Alois Daisenberger.

Another 28 years elapsed, however, before the blessings he had received at his first mass worked out to be felt. For the first ten years he acted as coadjutor at Grassau and Schlehdorf, and as beneficiatus

at the school of Farchant; from 1831 to 1845 he was the curate of Uffing near Murnau. In 1839, when the position of a curate was vacant at Oberammergau, he refused a request made by the community to apply for this curateship, stating that "he did not wish to turn anybody out of his position who perchance might have applied before him".

When the curacy was again vacant in 1845, the community itself made a direct application to the king, asking "to graciously give this curacy here to Curate Daisenberger of Uffing because he was born in our neighbourhood, at Oberau, and because he thoroughly understands our conditions and requirements; moreover, we highly esteem him on account of his excellent qualities and have unlimited confidence in his abilities. We do not doubt that his presence will be a blessing to all of us, especially to our children, and we should deem it a favour to have him in our midst as he understands much about art. He would not only be our spiritual teacher but also a faithful counselor as regards our industry and our passion-play".

On July 9th the new curate of Oberammergau, Alois Daisenberger, moved into his presbytery, and a time of restless, unselfish activity began. His merits as to the passion-text have already been mentioned. From 1850 to 1880 he was the stage-manager of the play and the first performance he had put into rehearsal (1850) was called "perfect" by no less an authority than Eduard Devrient, the famous actor. It helped to found the world-wide fame of the Oberammergau passion-play.

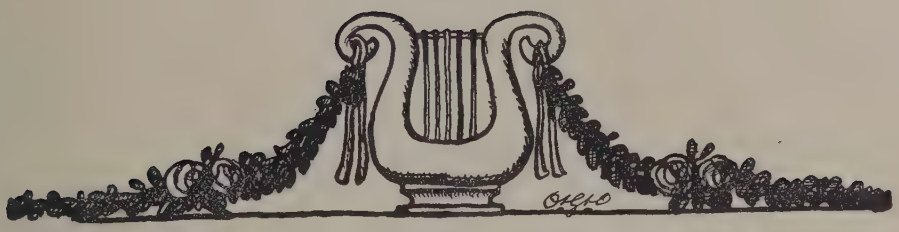
Aside of all that Curate Daisenberger was successful as a chronicler and writer. Even today his "History of the Village of Oberammergau", published in the "Archives of Upper Bavaria", is considered a standard-work. An octogenarian already, he wrote "Historical and Topographical Description of the Parish of Oberammergau" and "Description of the Deanery of Rothenbuch".

In 1875 he wrote a new text for "The School of the Cross". The so-called practice-theatre is indebted to him for a series of plays, most of them of patriotic or religious tendencies: "Theodolinde", "Otto von Wittelsbach", "The Founding of Ettal Monastery", "Joseph of Egypt", "Naboth", "Judith", "Genovefa", "Elisabeth, landgravine of Thuringia", and several others. He is also the author of many poems.

In 1862 King Max appointed him his Clerical Councillor and a couple of years afterwards the position of a canon was offered to him. The modest priest, however, refused to accept the latter in order to be able to live, work, and die at Oberammergau.

On April 20th, 1883, he died and on April 23rd he was buried in the churchyard near the southern exit of the church. What he meant to Oberammergau and its people has been expressed by Mayor Lang, who said at his funeral:

„A priest and spiritual father, faithful, simple-minded, devout, and sincere! The stern and yet so friendly teacher of your young days! The kind-hearted counselor and true friend of all parishioners! Like a patriarch he was in our midst, watching generations come and pass by, and when he was no longer able to follow his calling with the old vigour, he still was able to do one thing, and that he did: love us, and pray for us! Thousands know what our passion-play owes him: Respecting tradition, his skilful pen cleaned the text and made it possible for us to come into the inheritance of our forefathers."



The Passion Music.

The passion-texts before 1810 (the text of 1662, those by Rosner and Knipflberger resp.) were not accompanied by what we now call passion-music. They only contained a few hymns and later on "airs" or "musical illustrations" were added. They were, however, of little or no importance.

Father Ottmar Weiß is the first to make music an important factor of the play. In Rochus Dedler he found a congenial composer for his text.

Dedler's first composition dates back to 1811. In 1815 various passages of the text were altered and some new pieces of poetry inserted to which the music, of course, had to be adapted too. This remodelled composition was completely destroyed in 1817 when the biggest part of the village burnt down. So Dedler had to re-write his music for the third time, for the play-year of 1820, and upon the whole it has not changed since. Several times — especially around 1880 — it was attempted to substitute Dedler's music (allegedly being too baroque in style) by compositions in the spirit of Bach, Wagner, or other great composers, or even by what we call Cecilian music; but none of these attempts met with any success. Only passages that were remodelled at Oberammergau itself proved fit to be taken into the play, as the local composers were the only ones that had grasped the spirit of text and performance. Some successful remodelling was done in 1900 by Ferdinand Feldigl, preceptor, and from 1910 to 1922 by Eduard Lang, conductor, and Mr. Wittmann, headmaster at Oberammergau. So-called corrections, that had been made previously, had to be taken out again because they were felt to be somewhat alien in this old music; in our times we are more apt to appreciate the value of old things than some decades ago; thus instead of an improvement these passages would only appear to be out of harmony with the whole. For 1930 the music has been revised by the man who understands Dedler best, Professor Zeno Michael Diemer; his grandfather, father, and son, all were leaders of the choir at their times. Guido Diemer is the reciting singer this year. Dedler's spirit has been maintained scrupulously in whatever remodelling was done.

Dedler has been strongly influenced by Mozart. Nevertheless his work is by no means a mere copy of the grand old master, but an entirely independent creation of its own. Perhaps Dedler would have become a great composer himself if he had lived long enough and if he had not been worried so much about his daily bread. Among the most beautiful passages the Hymn of the Entry ("Hail to Thee"!) has to be mentioned. Moreover: The hymn at the Lord's Supper ("Kind is the Lord!") and the Song of Worship preceding the way to Golgotha, and the recitative bass-song of the prelude ("Fall prostrate in holy wonder!")

According to the official play-book the orchestra is composed of 50 musicians. The choir consists of 26 female and 19 male singers.

The Stage in 1930.

The Theatre

Like in other villages in Oberammergau, too, the passion was first presented in the church itself. From the time of the pestilence on the churchyard was used as a stage. When the church was rebuilt in 1740 its choir was constructed in a manner that made an occasional performance in the church possible, should a necessity arise on account of rain or similar reasons.

For the passion-plays in 1815 and 1820 a new stage was constructed on the churchyard adjoining the northern wall of the church; the builder was the Beneficiatus of Matins, Nicolaus Unhoch, as already mentioned in one of the preceding chapters. In 1830 this stage was transferred to the site where the passion-theatre is now situated, to the so-called "passion-meadow"; in 1840 the somewhat "oriental form of the stage, showing the styles of the 17th and 18th centuries" was replaced by a building of "greek style"; and finally, in 1890, the passion-theatre was erected as we know it from pictures or have seen it ourselves.

At the beginning the spectators' accommodation was the churchyard, later on the open meadow, and the roof above it was the sky; either the sun was burning or else the rain was pouring down. Outwardly a high fence of wooden boards closed off the theatre against undesirable guests and inside the spectators sat on hard benches or stood on tribunes that used to be set up at the back. Only around the middle of the last century the "better seats" were scantily roofed. A real spectators' hall was erected in 1880, but it was not sufficient to house the whole audience. In 1899 a solid hall was built having six large arches of iron; with a spanning width of 42 meters in a room of equal

Consecration of the new Stage by his Eminence Cardinal Dr. M. v. Faulhaber

Consecration Festivities in the new Theatre.

length, and a height of 27 meters, 4200 spectators could be sheltered.

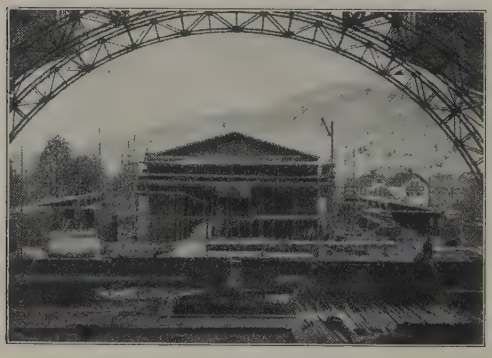
Modern times required a new construction of the theatre, not only for reasons of accommodation, but chiefly for safety's sake. The old passion-theatre with its dressing-room attached to it was a wooden building and especially unsafe therefore in case of fire.

The building of the new theatre was a necessity and the broad-minded, far-seeing passion-committee, advised by the experienced stage-manager of 1922 and 1930, Mr. Georg Johann Lang, granted the necessary funds.

The architectural design was mady by Oberregierungsrat Richard Neithart, that for the innovations of the stage by Professor Adolf Linnebach, both of Munich. The constructing work was directed by Dipl.-Ing. Raymund Lang, a government architect. The firms taking part in the execution were Messrs. Gebrüder Rank, Munich, and Messrs. Maschinenfabrik München-Augsburg.

Adding a new arch to the hall (which work was carried out by Messrs. Eisenwerk Kaiserslautern) the spectators' accommodation was extended by 9 meters, so that it now is able to shelter 5200 persons.

The character of an open air stage has again been strongly emphasized as compared to the old stage. The middle stage (which had to be maintained on account of the tableaux vivants and several important scenes although it represents something alien in an open air stage) has been fitted out with a glass roof and glass walls. Even with unfavourable weather conditions it can do without artificial light.



Reconstructing the Stage.

Stage-manager, Joh. Georg Lang.

The aspect of the new stage is one of quiet and clearness. The prospect is concentrated, focussed on the play itself. Our attention is no longer drawn off by overloaded side-scenes, imitated plastics, or unreal palaces. The horizontal high-flowing line leads the tender violet façade over into the blue of the open sky. Any figural decorations have been renounced on purpose; only the cross with the worshipping angels, forming a symbol of the holy play, has been suffered to occupy the gable of the middle stage.

Naturally the inner furnishings of the theatre had to be adapted to its architecture too. Georg Joh. Lang, the stage-manager,

designed new decorations to that end; they run on ten rollers which are driven by up-to-date machinery, that is, they may be removed by means of two stage-waggons. The costumes of the tutelar genii, the scenes involving masses of people, and a part of the living pictures, everything was made to harmonise with the new style. Thus the play truly may be said to be fine and grand, not only from a religious but also from an artistic point of view.

Attached to the stage there are the wardrobe and dressing rooms for the actors, singers, musicians, and firemen. There is a recreation room too, for many of the actors cannot leave the house for a whole day. There is also a studio for the taking of photographs, &c. By means of a loudspeaker and various light-signals a constant connection is established between the performers and the central — the soul of it all — the stage-manager.

Village Band (türkische Musik) in Oberammergau,
marching through the Village on the Evenings preceding the Play.

Oberammergau Carving-Workshop.

The People of Oberammergau and the Actors

Oberammergau has a population of about 2600 people; most of them are sculptors, crucifix-carvers, toy-makers, and painters. Even the children are trained to help their parents in cleaning and polishing the wooden figures. There are only few real farmers at Oberammergau; most of the carvers, however, own little farms besides their workshops. Generally they have a few cows, a few meadows, and are entitled to use part of the communal pastures and grounds.

The Ammergauers are not poor, as far as the meaning of that word goes. Destitution and misery, as they often prevail in the big cities, are rare exceptions with the villagers. On the other hand, however, they are also far from being rich or wealthy. The needs and pretensions of these people are as simple as can be. The big sums that go to the village at the occasion of the passion-play are nearly all spent on works of public utility. From former times Ammergau has taken over so many debts that until recently the net proceeds of the passion-plays were felt to be but a few drops of water on a hot stone. The play-year of 1922 does not come into question at all, as the inflation was in full swing then. Appalling amounts had to be spent for regulating and constructing work, for mending the damage that almost yearly was caused by that wild mountain river, the Laine. Great disbursements were made for all kinds of necessary buildings, for the water-conduits, for the car-

ving-school, for road construction, canalisation, &c. The individual Ammergauer himself gets very little for all the pains he takes in connection with the passion-play. Those who let out rooms have to equip themselves so as to be able to meet the demands of their guests (up to some degree at least); they have to spend money on furniture and many other things, incurring debts which they will be able to pay off after the "passion" if everything goes well. If one draws into consideration that during the passion-summer the Ammergauer has hardly any time left for himself to do the necessary work, if one does not forget that all the necessaries of life go up during that period, one will be ready to admit that the financial advantages of the single individual cannot be so splendid after all. On top of that the simple-minded country-people, inexperienced in business as they are, often become the victims of shrewd profiteers. The actors' honoraries, too, are by no means so high as some of our guests (or other lay-people, or opponents) are likely to think. Only a part of the surplus is distributed as honoraries amongst approximately 1000 performers; in 1910 e.g. — the last "normal" play-year, so to speak — the total of Mks. 833 000.— was divided among the actors. Certainly not a sum that would "pay" for the work done or the time spent! And even if a small amount is left to the actor — very often

Museum of Gg. Lang sel. Erben, Furnishers: Background and Emporium of the Museum's Chapel.

Carving-Workshop of Georg Lang sel. Erben, Furnishers.

he will not be able to enjoy it in any way. Many a performer has caught some illness or other, having to appear on the stage regardless of rain, storm, or cold; thus often what has been earned has to be spent again on doctor's bills! He who is acquainted with Oberammergau conditions knows very well how few of the hopes are realised that are set on the passion-play! And still, woe to the Ammergauer who would not put his whole soul on sacrificing everything for the play! Even if some of the latest enterprises do look a bit like commercial speculation, — the body of the Ammergauers devote themselves wholly to the play with all the fanatism of that true, genuine passion-spirit. The Ammergauer will be glad to earn something, for he has to provide for his family and has to keep his workshop going, and he never knows what the following ten years may bring; but he would act just the same, as his forefathers have done, without any remuneration if it were necessary, without any hopes of material profit. The artistic instinct in him is strong enough to render material advantage a matter of secondary importance. Thus in all the local customs and habits there are always two elements that are inseparably united: the religious moment and the artistic

Nativity from the Workshop of Gg. Lang sel. Erben.

Guido Lang's House.

one. In Oberammergau's public life of today the religious element is still predominant. The ecclesiastical year with all its festivals, processions, and other religious customs is strictly observed. Today as in olden times the conversation in the innhouse stops and the men in the streets take off their hats when the bells chime out the "Angelus" from the church-tower. Even today it is a point of honour with all who have a talent for music or singing to put themselves at the service of the church on sundays and holidays. Now as in days of yore the so-called "Klöpflesnacht" is observed on the Thursday preceding the third Sunday of Advent. ("Klöpflesnacht" stands for: "The night when somebody knocks at your door".) The children assemble and go from one house to the other, singing quaint old songs in memory of St. Mary and St. Joseph who were seeking shelter at Bethlehem. "I bitt' Enk um an Oklopfat" they say,

Star-Singing.

asking for a little hand-out ("Please give me something for calling at your door"). Like in the times of the forefathers the "star-singing" is done on New Year's Eve. The village-musicians march through the streets in the cold, quiet winter-night, carrying a staff in their midst on which a shining star has been fastened. Before certain houses they stop and sing one of the old Christmas-songs, telling how the three kings came from afar to behold the miracle that had passed in the poor little stable at Bethlehem.

On the principal holidays of the year the high altar in the parish-church is turned into a little stage; during Advent-time the announcement of Christ's birth by Gabriel, the archangel, is plastically represented there; in Lent the Mount of Olives is shown, in the week before Easter the Holy Sepulchre is got up, and on Ascension-day it is the Lord's ascension that is set before the church-goers' eyes. Thus the Ammergauer's religious life is always in close touch with art; he cultivates artistic displays wherever it is possible. With all that, there is a jolly social life going on in the valley of the Ammer. The people of Ammergau enjoy theatres and concerts, and there is a number of respectable societies and glee-clubs that are eager to display their talents on the so-called "Stage of Practice".

Old Couple on the Way to Church.

Class-Room of the Wood-carving School.

The Oberammergau Carving School

The Carving School owes its existence to the local carving industry, the development of which may be surveyed at a glance in Furnisher Lang's museum. The works that have been preserved there clearly show that Oberammergau in former times did not only turn out so-called "barn-figures" or crudely carved crucifixes (as some people seem to be fond of stating) but, on the contrary, products of original genius. In many instances these works pass beyond the primitive art of the people, showing a sure technique, a profound knowledge of the human body as well as a delicate modelling of all its lines. The ornamental pieces, too, reveal a good knowledge of styles and present a rich variety of designs. Excellent painting adds to the charm of the whole execution.

In the times of Rococo and Baroque the carving industry was at its height; to the end of the Empire good products are still turned out; there are few pieces to remind us of Renaissance. Around 1870 a sort of wooden Gothic came into vogue throughout the country, a lot of inartistic trash being manufactured by means of the cock-saw; carving was on the decline then and many people were out of work for a long time. At the beginning of the last century already Beneficiatus Nikolaus Unhoch recognised the importance of giving the carvers a good fundamental training and therefore he founded a drawing school. A little donation of his made it possible to buy the necessary models and drawing-utensils. Up to 1810 a glass-grinder gave lessons free of charge; later on a painter filled this post.

Another donation was made and a little part of the net proceeds of the passion-play was spent on this kind of instruction.

It is not to be found out what remuneration the drawing-teacher got; considering the few lessons that were given and remembering the general standard of living then prevailing it is certain that it must have been very little.

The lessons were given in a room of the Elementary School.

In 1844 Tobias Flunger (who had gone to the Academy at Munich) was engaged as a drawing-master.

From 1856 on lessons in modelling were given too.

A few years afterwards the government of Bavaria decided to found a carving-school in order to prevent a further decline of the carving-industry. All of the furnishers and most of the carvers misunderstood the motives of these endeavours. This led to the foundation of the District Drawing and Carving School at Partenkirchen although there was nobody there who took any interest in carving except a turner who made little carvings that he used to hand over to Ammergau furnishers.

The drawing-school at Oberammergau was declared a branch and was put under supervision and inspection. Around 1870 the upper part of the school-house (the one that was situated towards the East and that served to house the hay for the schoolteachers little farm) was turned into a spacious class-room. The drawing-master was offered 50 florins and aside of that he was to get free lodging in the communal building.

In 1872 Böhmländer, an ivory-carver who had got his training at the Nuremberg Artcraft School, took up this position; being a Franconian, however, he found it difficult to adapt himself to the conditions of this mountain-village of Upper-Bavaria; as he was an ivory-carver he never thoroughly understood the technique of wood-carving, and so he applied for his transfer after two years of service. He was succeeded by Ludwig Lang who had just left Professor Knabl's studio at Munich. He devoted all his energies to the school for over 40 years. Arranging exhibitions and getting parents and furnishers interested in his work he succeded in putting the school on a higher level. In 1877 Ludwig Lang introduced day-lessons in carving; without asking for any remuneration he put his own rooms at the disposal of the pupils. This independent step of his was not opposed by the school-authorities; he was given to understand, however, that he would be fought off most energetically if he ever ventured to work against the District School.

Encouraged by the rapid development of building, Garmisch-Partenkirchen took more interest in manufacturing furniture than in carving; the Ammergau School, on the contrary, sought to revive old traditions by concentrating its interest on religious art and on the carving of cribs, Nativities, animals, and other figures.

In 1883 the school was given a budget of its own; it remained a branch as before, but after eight years of teaching without remuneration a normal salary was finally fixed for the teacher. Every inspection that was made turned out to be a complete success for the school and when the Ammergau carvers finally were awarded three silver medals at the Munich exhibition of 1888 it was permitted to sever its relations to the District School and to unite with the Artkraft School of Munich.

Some more donations were made in 1890 and after the inspections of 1890—93 the director of the school was taken over into the passion-fund. In 1890 the old Carving School was built, one of the houses that now belong to "Hansl- und Gretlheim"; it contained 2 rooms for carving, one room for

drawing, and one for modelling; the room that hitherto had served for the drawing and modelling classes was turned into a permanent show-room. In 1894 Anton Lechner, a sculptor and painter (who at Munich had been thoroughly trained in drawing and in the painting of carvings) joined the school as an assistant. Even before that time he had already rendered valuable services by his unofficial cooperation.

The available posts were always filled from now on and applicants sometimes had to be rejected.

The school having become independent, it now was able, to apply for annual allowances. Models were purchased and a library of professional works was founded.

The sunday-lessons in drawing were much frequented by older pupils of different trades; to them special lessons were given. In order to be able to teach these pupils the teachers themselves attended trade-schools at Munich at their own expense.

Around 1900 the school was asked to give up toy-industry too. Before long, however, enlarged and less artistic copies of the respective designs could be seen everywhere in the toy-shops of the cities. Any artistic touch had been done away with by mechanical production; a ready sale, however, was secured by lowest possible prices.

In 1908 contests were introduced. The Chamber of Trade entitled the school to let its pupils pass the government-examinations for woodcarvers and sculptors.

By and by the school-building proved to be too small and thus state, district, and community, all united their efforts in getting up the actual building, the design of which had been made by Professor Pell, a Munich architect. The inauguration took place on October 12th, 1909.

In 1911 Christian Wittmann, a sculptor who formerly had been with the Trade School at Fürth, was won for the position of a teacher for carving. Anton Lechner, being especially interested in the painting of carvings, was claimed by the Munich Artcraft School. Owing to the lessons in painting he had given at Oberammergau many carvers were now able to paint their cribs themselves. The years before the war were times of quiet development and success.

In 1914 Director Ludwig Lang (who had been the leader of the school for 40 years) retired; he was succeeded by Professor Jokob Bradl who proved to be an especially valuable teacher for drawing and painting. He died from an apoplectic attack in 1919.

On May 1st, 1920, Professor Josef Faßnacht was appointed director of the school. In 1921 the school got the privilege to let its pupils pass a final examination implying the degree of mastership.

In 1923 the school was taken over by the state. In 1926 it was again enlarged as the light-conditions in the carving-rooms were quite inadequate; everything was arranged in a more practical way. Lectures in the history of art, in style, and in plastic anatomy were newly introduced.

In 1928 Anton Lechner retired from his post of headmaster, after having served for 40 years; to replace him his son Wilhelm Lechner, sculptor, entered the service; among other works of importance he designed and executed the soldiers' memorial at Landshut. In 1929 Headmaster Josef Mitterer of Fürth was transferred to this place.

In order to be able to continue its existence, Oberammergau's carving has to adapt itself to the taste and to the style of our times. The present management of the school strives towards getting away from the copying of patterns. It is furthering original ideas and believes in individual treatment. It is fighting for the existence and for the prosperity of Oberammergau's carving industry.

"The Passion"

To the Ammergauer "the passion" does not only mean the play itself; to him it means the whole summer in which the plays take place — the long, great, and troublesome time with all its labours, fatigues, exultations, and triumphs. By "passions" the Oberammergauer measures time, into "passions" he divides his life, just as the old Greeks were living from one Olympiad to the other.

The preparations begin always in the year that precedes the play. At that time the Oberammergau family-man begins to have the necessary repairs done to his house, keeping himself busy with all kinds of reconstruction-work and having all sorts of trouble with the masons and the builders; he borrows money and incurs debts; proudly watching the progress of the work he can't help seeing at the same time that the debts grow too; and so he often asks himself: "Will there be a reward for all the sacrifices I am making?" But he is an Ammergauer and that means he has the light blood of artists in his veins.

After the Election-Service.

The ever-saving housewife meanwhile passes review of her stock of pillows, matresses, bolsters, and blankets. What may be used again of the things that were left from the last passion? Ten years are a long time — many articles have suffered during cold, wet winters through inadequate storing or similar causes; much of it had to be sold in the mean time because the room was needed or because a little ready-money was necessary!

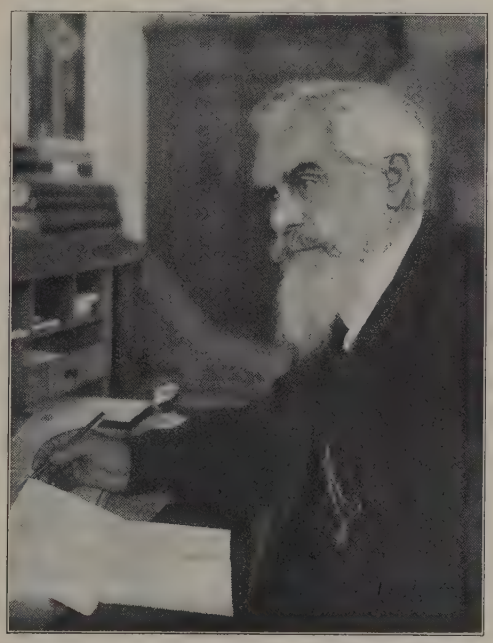
The possibilities and prospects the family has with the coming passion-play elections also play an important role in these calculations.

If father gets the part he is dreaming of day and night, if one of the daughters is permitted to join the "tutelar genii" or one of the boys may play his violin in the orchestra, or if one or the other of the family is allowed to become one of the "multitude" — then all will be well! Then both ends will meet! Thus there is an un-

easy time until the final decision has come out.

The passion-committee, with whom this decision rests, consists of the whole communal council, two honorary members, Dr. Franz X. Bogenrieder, the local priest, and the former Director of the Woodcarving School, Ludwig Lang; moreover, there are six citizens that have been elected by the communal council for this special purpose. The sessions of the committee begin; the preliminary elections have taken place; the results are kept secret; now the main elections are to come; breathless tension has got hold of the whole village.

Dr. Fr. X. Bogenrieder, the Pastor of Oberammergau.

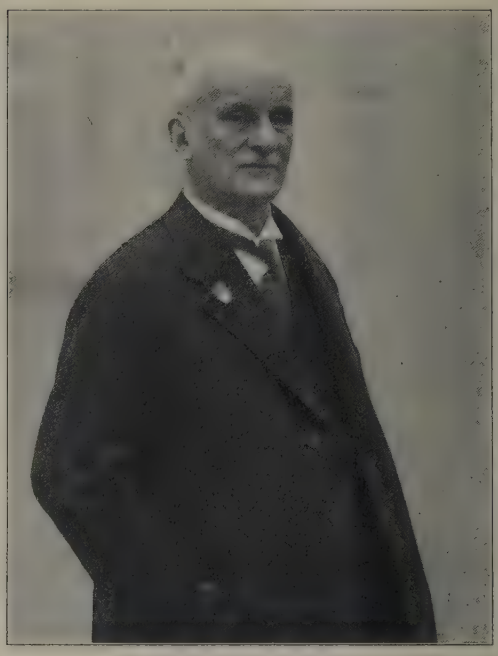


Hanns Mayr, the Mayor of Oberammergau.

At last the great day has come. In the morning, at 8 o'clock, there was a solemn service in church. With what fervor many a man may have prayed that his dearest wish may be fulfilled! But how much disappointment was there when the evening had come! The young people are always glad; but the grown-ups find it hard to put up with the disappointment they have experienced and they try to get over it as best they can. The first impression one gets after the elections is one of grief and sorrow, and it is well that there is a long mountain-winter between the election and the beginning of the rehearsals; thus the wounds have time to heal, the minds cool off, and when spring comes along and the first "Hosannah" rings out on the passion-stage, all jealousy has been forgotten and everyone feels the work out there is his own work too, no matter in what role he contributes to it as long as he d o e s contribute without looking back to the past. And if he can't take part in it any longer there is still one thing left to him and that he certainly does: To love and esteem, to grasp and embrace the grand work of his forefathers — the passion-play.

The elections bearing many a surprise,

Alois Lang: Christ.



Professor Zeno Diemer.

but on an average excellent results have been attained to. As in 1922, Georg Johann Lang, academical sculptor and second mayor of the village, was elected first stage-manager. His management meanwhile has become more concentrated in many respects. According to his new conception he inserted a number of scenic details, all designed by him, that tend to fix the eye of the spectator more on the action itself than on the scene, enhancing the play by their clearness and simplicity. With all that, the merits of the former stage-manager, Ludwig Lang, Director of the Carving School, remain untouched; he has won great distinction by his merits for the play, the stage, and the whole arrangement of the performances. The

Hansi Preisinger: Magdalene.

Anton Lechner: Annas.

Anni Rutz: Mary.

Johannes Lang: John.

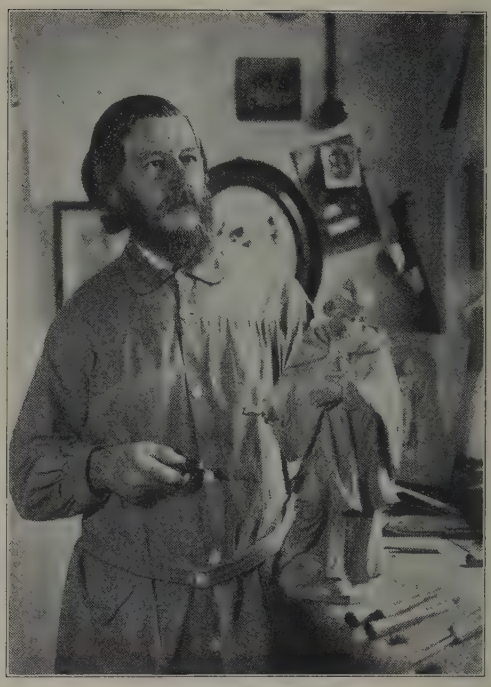
first conductor of the passion-orchestra is Preceptor Sattler, a well-renowned musician; under his leadership both, orchestra and choir were able to maintain themselves on the same high level as under his predecessors, Feldigl and Wittmann. His assistant is the second conductor, Wilhelm Friesenegger. The village-band that marches through the streets on the evenings preceding the plays, playing what they call "the retreat", is also composed of excellent musicians. As reciting singers appear: for bass, Guido Diemer, the leader of the choir in 1922 (whose wonderful voice made a great impression the last time too); for tenor, Simon Feldmeir, teacher.

A debutant in the role of Christ is Alois Lang. Right from the beginning it seemed

Andreas Lang: Simon of Bethany.

Joseph Mayr: Rabbi Archelaus.

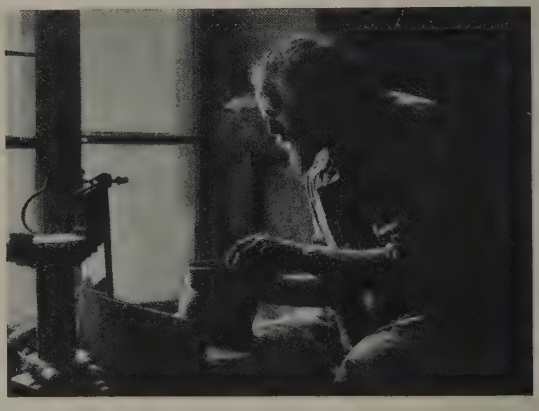
Hugo Rutz: Caiaphas.



Peter Rendl: Peter.

certain that he would be the successor of Anton Lang, which latter had acted as Christ in three successive plays from 1900 to 1922. The impersonation of the character of Christ has been worked out by Alois Lang quite independently and his conception is one all of his own; in many respects he seems to turn out a happy combination between "Christ" Mayr and the former Lang. It may be a little too early, however, to draw a comparison between 1870 and 1930 right now.

Guido Mayr: Judas.



Anton Lang: Prologue.

Joseph Albrecht: Marcus.

Melchior Breitsamter: Pilate.

Anton Lang recites the prologue this year; in the role of Caiphas we again find temperamental Hugo Rutz; the prologus of 1922, Anton Lechner, is Annas this time; Andreas Lang, the Peter of 1922, is now Simon of Bethany; Peter Rendl — Joseph of Arimathea in 1910 and 1922, John in 1890 and 1900 — acts as Peter; Guido Mayr appears in his old part of Judas. All these actors are so well-known, experienced and animated by the old passion-spirit as they are, and they have been mentioned so often in connection with previous plays that it will be unnecessary to describe their lives again, nor the manner in which they act in their roles. In choosing Anni Rutz for the part of Mary the community acted very wisely. Her quiet, profound nature, her talent to express suffering and pain in a great diversity of forms finds all the chances of manifesting itself in a highly sympathetic manner. Hansi Preisinger acts as Magdalen; right away from life she has found the path that leads to truth. Both impersonators won great distinction in the practice-plays that are got up by the community between the passion-years. Johannes Lang, on the other hand, who has just the right outward appearance to impersonate the Lord's favourite disciple, is a debutant on the stage. As the principal actors will speak for themselves in the following chapter, I hope to be permitted to conclude now. To the Oberammergau Passion-Play the Lord's answer may by applied: When asked by His disciples "Lord, where art thou living?" He simply replied "Come and see!" Many already came to Oberammergau who had serious doubts as to whether such a holy thing may be got up on a stage, many who thought that the subject perhaps was too sacred to make a play of; but at the end of the performance they joyfully joined in the last words of the choir:

Hallelujah! Praise, Honour, Worship, Power and Glory be thine from Everlasting to Everlasting!

Interviews with the leading Actors

Alois Lang, the impersonator of Christ in 1930, writes:

Oberammergau is the home of the crucifix-carvers and as long as I can think back my family devoted itself to this art. I was

Eighteen Years old.

born on May 29th, 1891; my father, Wilhelm Lang, and his wife Josepha, née Hochleitner, descend from an old Ammergau family, a branch of the family of Lang. The first years of my childhood I spent in the house of my mother's parents but in 1905 my father built a house of his own, at the time of the performance of "The School of the Cross". This house is now his property. After leaving the Elementary School I attended the Trade School and took lessons in drawing and modelling at the Carving School here; at the same time I became acquainted with the traditional art of the people of Oberammergau in the studio of my father. During my spare hours my favourite hobbly was cultivating and improving our large orchard. On free days, however, I was always lured to the peaks of my beloved mountains. In comradeship with some friends of mine I became one of the first natives to ski. Besides nature, it was chiefly dramatic art and literature that attracted me. Already as a boy I took a feverish interest in all the events that took place on the stage during the so-called "practice-plays". In 1910 I was the Egyptian Joseph in one of the living pictures of the Passion Play. After the Passion Play I served as a gunner with the 1st Bavarian Regiment of Field-Artillery. With pleasure I remember the time of my military service. After finishing my military service I tried to improve myself in the art of carving.

In 1913 I took part for the first time in popular plays that were got up by some local societies. At that time I also made the acquaintance of my future wife, Miss Mathilde Schreiber; she had come to Oberammergau from Munich, after her father had died there. At Christmas 1913 we became engaged and on May 11, 1914, we celebrated our wedding. A temporary separation caused by 3 weeks military service was a hardship for the young couple who had just returned from their honeymoon, but how cruel was the parting that resulted from the long, weary years of war! On August 5, 1914, my regiment left Landsberg for the front and on August 26 I was seriously injured by shell-fragments on the left hip when attacking Fort Manneville. Hardly had I recovered when, being an experienced skier,

I had to join a newly formed battalion of skiers, and already on January 15, 1915, I was back at the Vosges front. On an especially difficult night patrol duty I gained my first decoration, the E. K. II (Iron Cross of the Second Order). Later I was awarded the "Cross of Military Merit with Crowns and Swords" and the Austrian Medal for Bravery.

Towards the end of the war I got news of the death of my mother. On foot I went back to my native country, but unfortunately I was some hours late, so that I was unable to attend her funeral. With eager zeal I returned to my customary occupation. My wife had succeeded in getting some connections, owing to which I was able to employ some home-workers. The main products of my studio then consisted of different light-fittings, table- and desk-lamps of divers styles; besides that, however, we continued to make crucifixes and cribs, our real home-industry. At that time the "practice-plays" were taken up again under the management of Ludwig Lang, for many years the director of these plays. In the Biblical drama "Jephta's Daughter" I was given the rôle of Ephraim, the youthful lover of the heroine. Critics began to praise my voice and my speech and pointed me out as the coming impersonator of Christ. Even at that time I arranged my life so as to be able to obtain that part some day. — After a second "practice-play" the Passion-year of 1922 had come. The election favoured the former impersonator of Christ with a slight majority of votes. Although it was some compensation to be appointed an understudy of Christ by a second election, I was glad, however, that it never became necessary to take over that part, for it would have been difficult to change over suddenly from the rôle of the High Priest and spokesman of the Supreme Council, Nathanael, to that of Christ. Among the distinguished guests of my house in 1922 I should like to mention the wife of Mr. Winston Churchill, the wife of the British Ambassador to Egypt, as well as the Italian Socialist Leader Casalini.

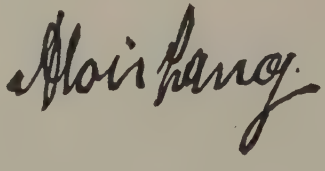
It was not easy in my profession to make up for the time lost through the war. By the aid of various books, however, especially in the realm of Christian art, I was able to improve myself, and finally I changed over from crucifix-carving to the carving of figures in general. I succeeded in making headway and was able to turn out several large church-figures for some churches in the Rhineland. Apart from my profession my most beloved hobby is the care of bees. By close study and after attending lectures I am so well acquainted with the subject that my bee-farm, containing about 35 hives, may be considered up-do-date according to the present status of science.

Acting in a popular Play
by Anzengruber.

In the autumn of 1928 I was elected a member of the Passion committee. I belong to the sub-committee, the so-called board of construction, whose task it is to make the decisions for the construction of the new stage and the new wardrobe. My great predilection for building was furthermore gratified when enlarging my own house, which was too large for a one-family cottage and yet too small for a pension. The construction has been done in such a way that a family-pension, — favourably situated, fitted with all modern comforts, and dustfree, — has been established and can be kept open all the year round.

What else shall I tell you? My dearest friends are the children. My wife assists me in this most beautiful of my hobbies, and has always some sweets ready for my darlings. The biggest event of all the year for us is the annual children's ski-race, for children up to 14 years of age. You ought to see my little ones when they come along, full of enthusiasm, to have their names put on the list of racers, and how eager they are to start!

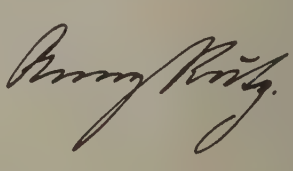
Last year I was appointed the impersonator of the Christ and it is my greatest desire to succeed in impersonating the rôle in the traditional manner, and to be able to impress the spectators as strongly as my predecessors have done.



Anni Rutz (Mary in 1930).

My ancestors (who formerly used to call themselves Ruez) had their homes at Oberammergau already some 400 years ago. Being a true Rutz, this is probably the reason why I love Oberammergau so much. I was born on July 19th, 1906; after I had spent a few joyful years at the Elementary School I went to Pasing where I was educated in the institute of the English Ladies; I shall always think of that time with a feeling of pleasure although it was just in the years from 1916 to 1920 that I was there. Later on I assisted my father in business; unfortunately he died quite suddenly from an apoplectic attack in July 1927, during a business-trip to Cologne. Just in that year I received a rôle for the first time in one of the Oberammergau practice-plays, and a leading rôle at that, but my father, who was so pleased with it, did not live to see me on the stage. The third day after his burial I appeared on the stage for the first time.

In autumn 1929 the elections for the passion-play finally began. Being fair-haired, I thought I might only come into question for the rôle of Mary Magdalen because that part had always been given to a blonde since many decades. Only four days before the elections came to an end I learned that I had been taken into consideration for the rôle of Mary. I was overwhelmed by joy when this wonderful task really was entrusted to me. I am glad to be permitted to contribute my share to the mission the Oberammergauers have and I solemnly promised myself to do my very best for it.



The impersonator of Mary Magdalen, the penitent sinner, Miss Hansi Preisinger tells us:

I was born on April 2nd, 1906, at Oberammergau. My parents let me have an education in the convent of the Dominican La-

dies at Polling. I was permitted to stay one year with relatives in Sweden. At present I am helping my parents in their business, in "Alte Post" Hotel that is.

In the passion-play of 1922 I was already one of the tutelar genii of the choir. As I always took great pleasure in singing I was allowed to take lessons from Mrs. Stern-Lehmann at Munich.

In the communal practice-plays I generally had the leading rôles. My pleasure was indescribable when I was elected Mary Magdalen for 1930. I deem it a great honour to act in this sublime rôle. The Oberammergauer does not feel as if he acted in a theatre; to us the play means keeping the sacred vow of our forefathers. It certainly is an exalting feeling to be permitted to present Christ's sufferings to a multitude of spectators, reminding them again and again of what the Saviour has done for us all.

Hansi Preisinger.

Anton Lang, the prologus, writes: I was born on January 17th, 1875, in "Hafnerhaus" (the "Potter's House") near the bridge that leads across the Ammer. When five years of age I was for the first time permitted to take part in the passion-play. My sister Monika took me along, for I enjoyed acting indeed. My grandfather, who acted as King Herod in 1870/71, gave me a lot of inspiration. He also carved the figures for a little Punch-and-Judy, which I then painted myself and this gave me infinite pleasure during many a happy hour. Being the first-born and only son, I learned the trade of my father and helped him putting up the stoves and hearths in Oberammergau and its surroundings. For my life I should have liked to become a real painter; as that was denied to me I painted at least all my pots, dishes, bowls, and other earthen-ware, and the walls of our workshop too. In 1890 my father acted as Ezechiel, one of the High Priests, and I — at the age of fifteen — was one of the multitude because I was too young for a part yet; for an angel, however, I was too old. My most ardent desire was to get the part of John for the next passion-play. By the elections for the play of 1900, however, I was appointed the impersonator of the Christ; this rôle I kept in 1910 and 1922 too. It marked the beginning of a life full of experiences of all kinds. Now I was able to develop myself. I had the chance to make the acquaintance of many noble-minded persons and was privileged to win the lasting friendship of many amongst them. Married to a true Oberammergau girl and having six bonny children, I cheerfully looked out into God's beautiful world. Travelling to Egypt and Palestine, to Greece and Rome in 1911, and to the United States in winter 1922/23, my life was furthermore enriched by numerous lasting impressions. In my trade I took to following the ceramic line of artcraft; my eldest son is assisting me in a truly excellent manner. For 1930 I was elected the prologus. For my friends, the friends of my household and of the passion-play I wrote down my memoirs in a little book: "Reminiscences".

Anton Lang

What I have been told:

Hugo Rutz (Chaiphas in 1930). His house being situated at my road, I first pay a visit to Hugo Rutz. The door of the old

forge is open, hammers are beating the anvil and sparks fly about, several men in leather aprons are busily running to and fro, but Hugo Rutz is not amongst them. At the side of the few stairs that lead up to the treshold there is still the same old picture of St. Mary; I remember that painting when I was a boy; it always was re-painted in the same colours and in spring-time it used to be decorated with green leaves and flowers as long as the season would permit it.

Hugo Rutz has to be found first. Although he takes pains to answer my questions it is quite evident that he would rather escape from the interview. He suffers to be asked what I already know to a great extent: He was born in 1886; in 1890, when he was four years old, he appeared in the multitude; in 1900 he was one of the orchestra and in 1910 he assisted as a bass-singer; in 1922 he became Caiphas, a passionate keeper of his doctrine, an inflamator of his people of great impressiveness and persuasiveness. This year he acts in the same rôle. As he is sitting there, before me, the flow of his speech is scarce and constrained until his father arrives at the door. Now he has found a thread, now it is easier for him to talk since he has not got to speak about himself any longer.

His father, Jakob Rutz, who celebrated his 84th birthday this year, is still one of the church-choir. Already in 1850 he was one of Adam's children in that year's passion-play; from 1860 to 1910 he sang in the choir; in 1880 and 1890 he was the prologus; later on he became bass-singer and leader of the choir. It takes heaps of pains to get Hugo Rutz to talking about himself again. I remind him of several plays in which he took part in the mean time. In the time between the passion-plays Hugo Rutz did not only appear in Biblical practice-plays, but — like Alois Lang — he was also an exceptionally good impersonator in popular plays of all kinds. In Anzengruber's "Kreuzlschreiber" his acting was simply charming. ("Kreuzlschreiber" is a nickname for illiterate persons unable to sign their names; instead of a signature they put three crosses to the letter which somebody else has written for them.)

*

Guido Mayr (Judas in 1930). Across the Mühlbach (the "Mill's Brook") is the place where Guido Mayr, the play's Judas, is residing. His face also looks like "three days of rainy weather" when he sees me coming — like three passion-days of rain even — but he pulls himself together. I feel that it means asking too much to devote his time to me, for a family-man always has a lot of work at hand, even in the "very last minute". I give him a little time to recover and then he starts telling me something after all. He appears on the stage since 1890, at first in the multitude and as one of Adam's children. At that time Frau von Hillern once paid a visit to his parents, accompanied by a gentleman of the Vienna Imperial Theatre, and he — ten years old then — gave a little sample of his theatrical abilities by acting Judas' despair before that gentleman. The latter thereupon urged him to go to the stage. He would have provided for his theatrical training, but mother did not let him go. In 1900 he acted as Raphael, the angel, in "Tobiah's Leave-taking" and as Zorobabel, the servant of the temple.

In 1910 he was a tenor-singer, in 1922 he was allotted the part of Judas. In 1922 an attempt on his life was made; one of the spectators tried to shoot him on the stage. Another time ten English ladies had been sent to stay over night in his house by Cook, the famous tourist's office; on learning at the treshold that this was Judas' house they

immediately turned round and hurried back to Cook's Office, declaring that they would on no account spend a night in the house of such a scoundrel. Cook's people did their best to calm their feelings and finally they assented and came back. And afterwards they were glad they had done so and did not regret it at all. Many a time he has been told that simple-minded farmers fell into veritable fits of rage at seeing him in his rôle of Judas.

"King Lewis II" is another chord that is still ringing in his heart. He clearly remembers the day of his childhood — he was six years of age then — when mother and grandmother came back from the service that had been held at the occasion of the king's tragic death, tears in their eyes and deeply afflicted. His father often told him about the king; once he hid behind a bush of the castle's garden because the king happened to come along. Father Mayr had been working in the castle's garden then. The king, however, had seen him and ordered him to come out and appear before him. He asked him why he had tried to hide behind the bush. Father answered he had been told expressly that the king did not want to see anybody in the garden. The king then said: "Do not hide any longer from now on. It is not true that I hate people, I love them".

*

Peter Rendl. (Peter in 1930). Peter Rendl is not pleased at my visit either. He seems to be pretty busy too. "What shall I tell about myself? Just as if I were goodness knows who?! There isn't much to be told anyhow". In 1880, at the age of ten years, he was in the multitude. In 1890 he was John. Josef Mayr, who became his father-in-law in 1897, was the Christ of that year's play. Peter Rendl's father, Thomas, was Pilate in 1890 — the Pilate whom Wyl mentions in his "Maitage in Oberammergau". ("May-Days at Oberammergau"). In 1900 Peter Rendl was John again, just as his father appeared in his old rôle of Peter. In 1910 "old Rendl" was Simon of Bethany whereas "young Rendl" — as in 1922 — acted as Joseph of Arimathea. In 1922 Peter Rendl's daughter Paula was the impersonator of Magdalen. One may see how intensely some families are engaged in the play. The casts of the plays are real lines of ancestors for the Ammergau people if one casts a glance over the things right from their beginning, from 1634 that is This does not only refer to the actors but to the musicians and singers as well Members of the Zwink family for example are always to be found amongst the musicians.

*

Hans Mayr, Mayor (Herod in 1930). It was most difficult to obtain an interview of Peter Rendl's brother-in-law, Mayor Mayr. He is the son of "Christ Mayr" and also his successor in the Mayor's office. "Born in 1870; Herod in 1910; Pilate in 1922; and now Herod again. Here you are. That's all I am going to tell you". In 1880 he was in the multitude; in 1890 he assisted as violincellist and in 1900 he was a bass-singer. He does not even mention his father. "You know I should not like to get any taller than 1 meter 82" he says smiling. But he has outgrown this limit already, it can't be helped. His children remind me of "Christ Mayr", his father, for he also was exceptionally tall. I am sure he was the most good-looking old gentleman I have ever seen. He always made a great impression on me when I saw him in the days of my childhood, wearing his dark Havelock and his black, soft, broad-brimmed felt-hat on his silvery curls.

*

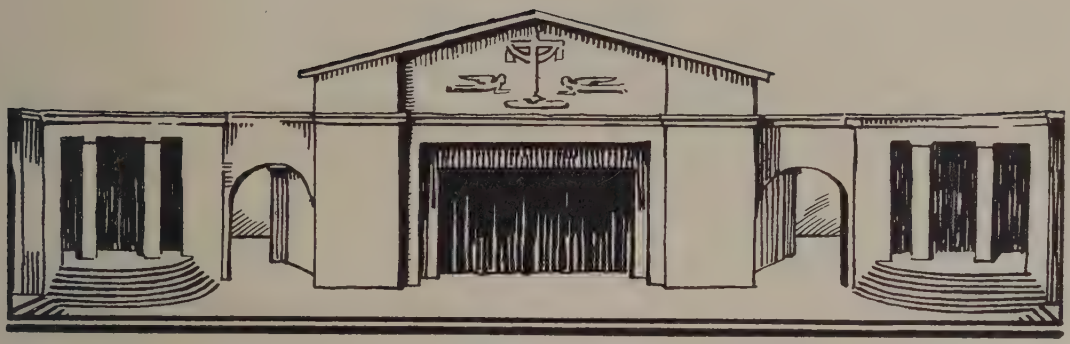
Anton Lechner (Annas in 1930). Anton Lechner, the impersonator of Annas, the High Priest, was born on September 13th, 1862. He is a typical Ammergauer to whom singing, music, and acting are affairs of the heart; he hardly ever stayed away from any of the practice-plays. In the passion-play of 1870/71 he was an angel and one of the multitude as well. In 1880 he was taken into consideration for the part of John; the orchestra was very weak at that time and so he had to become a violinist in Clerical Councillor Daisenberger's orchestra. In 1890 and 1900 he was a tenor solist among the singers; in 1910 and 1922 he was the prologus. The part of Judas for a long time was the one he coveted most, because for many decades past the members of his family had had it without any interruption. His great-grandfather acted in that rôle, his grandfather held it for three passion-plays in succession, his father even four times; and Gregor Lechner's acting was famous all over the country. Many dear reminiscences of childhood are linked to that rôle for Anton Lechner; however, he was found to be more important in the choir and as prologus. In 1890 and 1900 he had even understudied the part of Judas; his services, however, were never called upon in that rôle. Since over sixty years Anton Lechner is a member of the church-choir. When only eight years of age he was permitted to sing in a holiday-mass that had been composed by Clerical Councillor Daisenberger. For forty years he was teacher at the Oberammergau Trade School for Woodcarving, giving lessons in carving, modelling, drawing, and painting the carvings.

*

Melchior Breitsamter (Pilate in 1930). Melchior Breitsamter, the impersonator of Pilate, acted as John in 1922. In 1910 he had been one of the angels and one in the multitude. He was born in 1899. He often took part in the practice-plays. His father is a member of the Supreme Council; his mother's father was one of the disciples; his mother's brother was and is again now one of the disciples. His father's brother, Gregor Breitsamter, was Caiphas in 1910, Herod in 1922. Melchior Breitsamter is married to the daughter of Andreas Lang, this year's Simon of Bethany and former years' Peter. She is a paintress of flowers, being the niece and pupil of Zeno Diemer, the famous painter.

*

Hans Lang (John in 1930). Hans Lang, the impersonator of John, was born on October 20th, 1900. His father is Sanitätsrat Dr. Anton Lang. He is the grandson of the former Mayor, Johann Lang, a man who was of great importance for the development of Oberammergau. Up to the fourth class Hans Lang attended the Elementary School at Oberammergau; he then went to Oberrealschule (kind of middle-class school) at Weilheim. From 1923 on he studied woodcarving at the Oberammergau Carving School. In autumn this year he intends going to Munich in order to attend the Artcraft-School there and later on the Academy of Arts. He has a strong inclination towards technics, being fond of constructing toy-machinery of all kinds. A motorcycle would be the climax of his wishes. His family, too, was always intensely engaged in the play.



The Passion Play of 1930

The official play-book of the community (which appeared for the first time in 1900) shows only slight changes for 1930 as compared to the last play-years. Frontispiece and vignettes in the text are by Professor Klein of Munich; they give the play-book an artistic touch and a handsome appearance altogether.

It is true, there would not have been any harm in shortening the text a little, especially for the first "presentations" of the afternoon. However, in deference to the historical arrangement of the whole action any shortening was refrained from, this time also.

On assembling behind the curtain of the middle stage, the actors say the Lord's Prayer, asking God's blessing down upon their play. A shot, fired from a little mortar, imposes silence on the spectators and the performance begins with the

Introduction.

The choir (tutelar genii) appears. The reciting bass-singer introduces into the theme:

(The German rhyme does not appear in English.)

"I will not — says the Lord —
The death of the sinner. Forgive
I will! He shall live!
My own son's blood shall reconcile!"

The middle stage opens and shows the first of the tableaux vivants, the first living picture: "The Expulsion from Paradise."

Man had sinned. Immediate punishment follows sin:

"Mankind is expelled from Eden's green,
Benighted by sin and horror of death."

But at the same time the gospel of God's redeeming love is proclaimed:

"From afar — from Calvary's height —
A glorious morning dawns into the night.
From the cross-tree's branches airs
Of peace ring through the universe."

The prologus bids welcome to the spectators:

"Greeting to all who are assembled here,
United in love for the Saviour ..."

He asks them to pay attention to the play and to say a little prayer at heart, for this is the hour in which a sacred vow is being fulfilled.

A second living picture follows — the counterpart of the Expulsion from Paradise:

"The Worshipping of the Cross." What was lost through Eden's Tree of Sin is regained by the Tree of Redemption and by the precious fruit that hung on it, by Jesus Christ.

The choir's song of worship has not ended yet:

"Eternal one! Listen to the stammering of thy children!" But already the crowds of people, headed by children, throng through the streets, escorting the Saviour in their midst and singing the impressive song of the entry:

"Hail to thee! Hail to thee! Oh son of David!
Hail to thee! Hail to thee! Our fathers' throne
Belongs to thee!

— — — — — —

Hosannah! He who reigns in heaven
May bestow all grace on thee!
Hosannah! He who sits on heaven's throne
Save thee for us — now and for ever!"

The play itself has begun.

Part I.

From the entry of Christ into Jerusalem to the apprehension in the Garden of Olives

1st Presentation.

Amidst the people's rejoicing Jesus enters into Jerusalem, expels the purchasers and traders from the temple, and returns to Bethany.

It is a princely entry, indeed! At the head the rejoicing children! Then the enthusiastic multitude! And in their midst, majestically calm, Jesus is riding on the ass, surrounded by His disciples and friends. What a gay coloured sight! What a happy day! Slowly two thousand years sink into nothing before the spectators' eyes; the present vanishes. Jerusalem rises up before our eyes, Jerusalem, God's holy city. As in days of yore "Parthians and Medes and Elamites and inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews also and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians" — as all these came to Jerusalem (Acts II, 9) — thus now, in this very hour, people from all parts of the world are crowding the large spectators' hall to behold "God's great deeds", to see the redemption of mankind.

During the entry the curtain of the middle-stage goes up, revealing the noisy bartering and bargaining of purchasers and traders and money-jobbers in that sacred place, the antetemple. "And when He was entered into the temple, He began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple: and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers and the chairs of them that sold doves. And He suffered not that any man should carry a vessel through the temple. And He taught, saying to them: Is it not written: My house shall be called the house of prayer to all nations, but you have made it a den of thieves?" (Mark XI, 15.) The pharisees' hatred and envy find a ready ally in their fight against the odious Rabbi, Christ, in the fury of the traders. Together they stir up the people. The incredible comes about. The same people who hailed Christ as their Messiah hardly an hour ago now turn against Him: "We stand by you", they say to the pharisees. "Moses is our prophet." The prologue to the second presentation refers to this sudden change:

"Behold! The cup of sorrow filleth,
For the aspic's poisonous rage
Conspiring with avarice
Broods ruin and death to Him."

2nd Presentation.

The Plot of the Supreme Council.

"The sons of Jacob, the patriarch, decide to get their brother Joseph out of their way."

"Come on! Let us kill him!
Nobody can nor will save him!"

This is the prelude to the next action. The High Priests and Pharisees assemble, scheming how they might get Jesus into their power.

"As Jacob's sons conspired against Joseph,
Ye soon will hear these scoundrels
Rail wildly at the Saviour
To demand His death and blood."

Caiphas, the High Priest of that year, has assembled the Supreme Council for an extraordinary session. Priest Nathanael has become the spokesman of the offended traders. They are called into the session and their services as "spies" are secured. They are to find out where the Lord is staying. Besides that they are to "inflame many others with the holy fire of revenge that is burning in their hearts." Christ is to be taken hold of at night and "shall be taken into custody secretly".

3rd Presentation.

The Leave-Taking at Bethany.

The prologue draws a parallel between the mother of young Tobiah and the mother of Jesus, comparing the bride's lamentation in the Canticle of Canticles to the pain of the Lord's mother at the imminent loss of Jesus. The effect of that parallel is strengthened by living pictures:

1. Young Tobiah bids farewell to his parents.

2. The loving bride bewails the loss of her bridegroom. To accompany the second introductory tableau vivant the well-known "Bridal Song" is sung, a solo-part for soprano:

"Where has he gone? Where has he gone?
The comeliest of men?
My eye — alas — it weeps for him
Love's hot and bitter tears".

In the course of the following action we find Jesus and His disciples on their way to Bethany to call, for the last time, at the house of His friends: Simon, Lazarus, Magdalen, Martha, Mary, the Lord's mother. Magdalen anoints the Lord's feet with delicious nard-oil. Judas grudges her this extravagance: "What a waste! What a loss to the poor!" But Jesus reprimands him: "The poor you have always with you: but me you have not always." He then takes leave of His friends. The fare-well to His mother belongs to the most touching scenes of the passion-play.

4th Presentation.

The last Visit to Jerusalem.

The people of Israel, within reach of their salvation, have rejected their Saviour.

"Therefore the All-Highest turns His face
from them,
Leaving them in perdition and desolation".

Israel is symbolised by Vasthi, the proud one, who is repudiated by King Assuerus. "Behold Vasthi! Look at her! A symbol it is
Of what the Lord will do to the synagogue..."

The connection with the following action is established. Jesus, going to Jerusalem with His disciples, weeps over the unfortunate city because it has failed to recognise the time of its trial and prophesies it a ter-

rible end. Peter and John go ahead in order to make preparations for the supper. Jesus Himself goes to the temple for the last time. On the way there Judas remains behind to reflect upon his situation and on the future. Thus it is easy for the envoys of the Supreme Council to tempt him into the treason against his master. Judas, blinded by his avarice, agrees. In the following monologue he tries to prove for himself that he has acted well, after all: "My good luck has come. If the master perishes, I have a little hoard saved up. If He be victorious and be willing to reveal His glory I shall fling myself at His feet in repentance. He will accept me once more."

5th Presentation.

The Lord's Supper.

The prologue introduces into the idea of the action:

"Ere the divine friend enter into suffering
He offers Himself to His beloved ones
As a food for their souls."

The same is shown by the introductory pictures: Mannah in the Desert, and Grapes from Canaan.

"The miracle in the waste of Sin
Points to the meal of the New Testament.
Kind is the Lord! Kind is the Lord!
He feeds His starving people with new food.
And yet, death came to all
Who ate in that desert of Sin."

Quite differently Jesus fulfills this allegory:

"The holy bread of the New Testament
Saves our souls from death
If eaten rightly."

And:

"Kind is the Lord! Kind is the Lord!
Once He gave the people
The grape's best juice
From Canaan.
And yet, this gift
Was for the body only
Destined according to God's will
But, to fulfill:
The holy wine of the New Testament
Will be the blood of His own son
To quench the thirst of soul.

Therefore:

Kind is the Lord! Kind is the Lord!
In the New Testament He offers
His flesh and blood
At the meal, in Salem's hall."

Action: Jesus eats the Pasch with His disciples and inaugurates the Holy Supper in His memory. A solemn scene! Silence reigns throughout the house. Like a father Christ speaks to the disciples; with touching humbleness He washes their feet. Jesus inaugurates the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. Judas leaves the hall. The Lord predicts His suffering and the faithlessness of the disciples. Peter wants to go to prison with Him, but the Lord warns him. "And the hymn being said, they go out unto Mount Olivet."

6th Presentation.

Introduction: Jacob's sons sell their brother for 20 pieces of silver. Envy and hatred drown the voice of conscience. In a similar way the love for money kills all feeling of friendship in the soul of Judas.

"Alas! The false friend joins His enemies
And a few pieces of silver

Kill love and faithfulness
In this knave's heart."
In vain the choir admonishes him:
"Oh, turn away from the path of sin!
Do not commit this crime!
But, no — the lust for money makes
him blind."

The traitor, led by Dathan, comes into the second session of the Supreme Council and pledges his word to carry out the treason. For that he receives thirty pieces of silver. The Supreme Council decides upon Christ's death. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea protest against this decision, a death-sentence without trial not being in accordance with the laws of Moses. They declare themselves off and leave the session whilst Caiphas concludes: "He shall die!"

7th Presentation.

Jesus on the Mount of Olives.

The beginning of the Lord's suffering is symbolised by the picture: "Adam has to eat his daily bread in the sweat of his brow".

The prologus says:
"As Adam toils, pressed by life's hardship,
His forces spent, sweat on his brow,
To atone his own sin —
Thus the sins of others press on the
Saviour."

The treachery of Judas is depicted by the example of Joab, who "near the rock that is in Gabaon" kisses Amasa like a friend — to stab a dagger into his heart.

"The deed done near the rock of Gabaon
Is now repeated by Judas, Simon's son.
Cursed is this bloody spot
Where Amasa fell,
Pierced by a scoundrel's hand,
Trusting in friendship's greeting, and
Deceived by Joab's untrue kiss."

Through the Garden of Olives Judas and the band of soldiers go up to the mountain. Up there, however, the word of the scripture is fulfilled: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death." Jesus is in anguish and trouble. His terrible struggle goes on. His sweat becomes as drops of blood, trickling down upon the ground. His soul fights and is victorious! "My father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will but as thou wilt." — "And there appears to Him an angel from heaven, strengthening Him."

And now the vilest treachery is committed that man has ever seen.

"Hail, Rabbi!"

"Friend, whereto art thou come? Dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" There is no weakness in Christ now. With majestic calmness He addresses the enemies: "Whom seek ye?" After manifesting his invincible power once more He is willing to go with them: "I am He. If therefore you seek me, let these go their way."

Dinner-time has come meanwhile and there is a pause. The spectators leave the theatre. One can tell by their faces that they have had an experience. If one might read all these minds? Will they think of what they saw, once they have returned to their countries and to their customary lives?

Part II.

From the apprehension of Jesus on the Mount of Olives to the sentence passed by Pilate.

The afternoon first shows us the trials: Before Annas, Caiphas, Pilate, Herod, and before Pilate again.

As an allegory to Christ's trial before Annas: Michaeas, the prophet, tells King Achab the truth, unlike the other pagan sham-prophets. One of them, Sedekias, therefore strikes his face. The reward of truth.

With nervous restlessness the priests wait for the news of Christ's apprehension. Finally they bring Him. The first trial ensues. As Jesus does not answer the questions to the liking of the assembly, Balbus strikes Him with his fist. Jesus is then taken to Caiphas.

9th Presentation.

Christ is sentenced to death by the Supreme Council. Judas, repenting, comes into the assembly.

Two pictures precede this presentation: Naboth, who is not guilty and who only defends his right before King Achab, loses life and property by the oaths of false witnesses.

And pious Job, who is afflicted by many plagues in spite of his piety, is despised by his friends and cursed by his wife.

"But patiently he bears the plague,
Afflicted by misery and scoff".

The crime of King Achab is a warning to all who have authority over others:

"When on duty do not forget
The invisible judge that is above you!
Before Him all men are alike
Be they needy or rich,
Be they of noble birth or beggars:
Justice alone is His command."

Jesus standing before the Supreme Council arouses our most heart-felt pity:

"Look at Jesus! How silently He bears it!
Brutes injure Him and beat Him!
Behold the man!
Feel pity as you see Him there
Standing in all His humiliation
And disgrace, — the man of suffering!
Alas, behold the man!"

Judas appears. Repentance drives him to go to the Synagogue. At dawn the Supreme Council has assembled there with Caiphas, the High Priest, at the head. They decide "to put the enemy of the Sanhedrin to death without delay". On the grounds of false evidence and on account of His answer ("Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed God?" — "Thou hast said it") Christ is sentenced to death for blasphemy. To obtain a confirmation of this sentence He is sent to Pilate. Judas tries to save the Master by giving back the thirty pieces of silver. Meanwhile Peter, sitting at the fire in the court of the temple, together with the soldiers and maidservants, has thrice denied the Lord.

10th Presentation.

The precursor of Judas in the Old Testament is Cain, the murderer of his brother, who dwelt as a fugitive on earth, pained by remorse. Judas reflects upon the Lord's love and kindness, and the memory of it lets his crime appear all the more terrible. He takes hold of a rope and hangs himself.

11th Presentation.

Christ before Pilate.

The band of soldiers who take Christ to Pilate are followed by the members of the Supreme Council, by the priests and the people. They accuse Christ and state the reasons that made them condemn Him

to death: "We have a law; and according to that law he ought to die because he made himself the son of God." Pilate, however, does not agree with the jews and fails to see in what Jesus is guilty. "I find no cause in Him according to the laws by which I have to judge." But when he understands that Nazareth, His home, belongs to Herod's jurisdiction, he orders Him to be taken to Herod, who is himself at Jerusalem in those days.

Formerly this presentation was preceded by a picture: Daniel in the Lions' Den; Now, however, there is no picture and no choir at this place.

12th Presentation.

Christ before Herod. Before Pilate again.

The Scourging.

Behold Samson! Look! His strong hands
Have to carry the chains of serfdom.
The hero who defeated thousands
Now wears the slave's garb of mockery.
Once so frightful to the enemies
He is now the subject of their merriment.
Philistines make game of him
Rejoicing over his weakness.
Thus Jesus, too, the Son of God
Is standing here in His white garb,
Exposed to ridicule and irony."

Samson forms an allegory to Christ in this hour. He, the invincible one, has been delivered into the hands of his enemies by treachery too, just like Jesus.

Herod, who has been awaiting Christ with curious pleasure, is greatly disappointed by the Lord's silence. For "he questions Him in many words. But He answers Him nothing." He, too, does not yield to the demand of the Supreme Council, whose members ask him to condemn Jesus to death. "I will not be guilty of the blood of so noble a king", he says, leaving the last judgment to Pilate, the governor. Pilate now tries to save Jesus by offering to release either Him or Barrabas, the notorious criminal. The Supreme Council demands that he should rather release Barrabas. Says Pilate: "You are not the people; let the people speak for themselves." He suffers Christ to be scourged, secretly hoping this pitiful sight might make them change their minds. "Perhaps it will cool off their rage".

13th Presentation.

Clad with the purple of the King of Mockery, Jesus is presented to the multitude. What a contrast to Joseph of Egypt, who in the first picture is presented to the people of Egypt as their sovereign.

"Songs of joy, rejoicing rang around him;
As the saviour of Egypt
He solemnly was presented.
But He, the Saviour of the world,
Is surrounded by rage and fury.
A blinded crowd will not give way
Until, unwilling, the judge declares:
Take Him you, and crucify Him!"

The second tableau vivant for the 13th presentation is "The drawing of lots for the two goats, one of which is released, whilst the other one is killed for the sins of the people". Now Christ, the innocent, and Barrabas, the robber, are put before the people in unworthy competition.

A tenacious struggle ensues between the crowd and the choir, symbolising the fight between Pilate and the hateful priests (which is going to be shown in the next scene).

Crowd: Barrabas be freed
From his chains!

Choir: No! Jesus be freed
From his chains!
Alas! Wildly their voices ring:

Crowd: To the cross with Him! To the cross with Him!

Choir: Oh, look at Him! Oh, look at Him!
What evil hath He done?

Crowd: If thou release this man
Thou art not Caesar's friend!

Choir: Jerusalem! Jerusalem!
The Lord will avenge His son's blood!

Crowd: It be upon us and our children!

Choir: It be upon you and your children!

The Supreme Council and the chief priests have moved the people to "demand the death of the Nazarene". They do as they are told. "Now Pilate may hear the people's will, as he wanted to hear it!" The crowd behaves "as in tumult, as in revolt". There is a last struggle for Christ between Pilate and the infuriated rabble. Pilate succumbs at hearing the threatening words: "If thou release this man thou art not Caesar's friend". He is "innocent of the blood of this just man" — but still, he pronounces the most terrible misjudgment of the world: "Take Him you and crucify Him!"

Part III.

From the Sentence by Pilate to the Glorious Resurrection of the Lord.

14th Presentation.

The Way of the Cross.

Two symbols to Christ's death on the cross, both of the Old Testament:

1. Isaac, destined to be offered for an holocaust, goes up the mountain, laden with wood.

The choir sings the mourning hymn of

"Worship ye and say thanks!
The chalice of suffering He drank.
He now will suffer death on the cross
Te reconcile God and the world."

2. Moses raises the Brazen Serpent.

"For as — standing erect in the desert —
The sight of the brazen serpent brought relief — —
Thus comfort and blessing and salvation
Now come to us from the cross."

Yes, this is as it may have been! The shouting and idly curious crowd around, the heartless executioners, and the ridiculing priests whose hatred has been satisfied at last — and amidst all this hurly-burly the Saviour carrying His cross in infinite, divine patience! Scenes of striking greatness and moving painfulness pass over the stage. The stations on the Way of the Cross, as we are wont to see them on the walls of our churches, become real. There is the 4th Station: Jesus encounters His deeply afflicted mother. What a meeting! Involuntarily our lips begin to murmur a prayer:

"Holy mother! Impress the wounds
Which thy son felt for me
Deeply into mine heart!
Let me, too, suffer with Jesus
The pains he bore for my guilt!
Let me share thy grief for Him!"

The 5th Station: Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to take up the cross. The 6th Station: Veronica offers the kerchief to Jesus. The 8th Station: Jesus comforts the weeping women. What strong, faithful love for His

friends, even on the way to death. Our soul, too, gets ready "to die with Jesus" in the holy play:

"To stay with Thee underneath the cross,
To share all Thine great sufferings,
This is what my heart is craving for!"

15th Presentation.

Jesus at Golgotha.

There is no allegoric picture to precede this presentation. What we are about to witness is so terrible that no symbol of the Old Testament would be grand and weighty enough to be put before the expiatory death of the Son of God. The prologus only gives a brief oral introduction to the action that is to follow. Prologus and choir are dressed in black this time.

Into the prologus' address the blows of hammering are heard — the crucifixion has begun. When the curtain goes up the crosses of the two thieves are already standing erect. The cross on which the Lord has been nailed is still lying on the ground. The soldiers are fastening the board with the superscription: "Jesus Nazarenus Rex Judaeorum." Now the Son of Man, too, is raised, as He had prophesied it. Whilst the soldiers are throwing the dice for the Lord's garments, the mother of the Lord, John, and Magdalen are standing underneath the cross, their hearts filled with pain. The scribes and pharisees at the other side are jibing and blaspheming. The Saviour suffers in silence. He speaks out the seven last words and dies: "It is consummated — Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." The ground shakes. Rocks are rent. The earth quakes. Fear and terror seize the people. "Let us hurry for home! God have mercy upon us! We have sinned! Spare us, oh Lord!" — According to the custom of the country the two thieves are slain dead. With Jesus, however, the scripture is fulfilled: "You shall not break a bone of Him." Faustus pierces His heart with a spear. Caiphas, the High Priests and Pharisees want to inflict another insult on Jesus. They will not be satisfied until "His body is cast into the criminals' pit". But Joseph of Arimathea asks Pilate for the Lord's body and takes Him down from the cross, assisted by Nicodemus. After a devout dirge ("Oh, once at Bethlehem! Now on Calvary! But this was the path the Father told Thee to go") the disciples carry their dead rabbi to His grave, followed by friends and women. The Saviour has died, but His love is alive:

"All ye passing by here
Stand still and look!
Where find ye love
To be compared to His love?"

16th Presentation.

The Resurrection.

For this representation, too, the allegoric picture (Jonah) has also been renounced. Two short scenes (Jesus arises from the grave — Magdalen and the women) lead over to the final presentation. Once more the prologus briefly reminds us of all we have seen and then he takes leave of the spectators:

"Go home now, friends, filled with devout love
For Him who loved you unto death
And who is still loving you in heaven now
Where the eternal hymn of victory rings out:
Praise to the lamb that was killed!
United with our Lord in heaven above
We all shall meet each other again!!"

Once more the curtain rises and the Lord ascends to heaven. Rejoicing, jubilant, victorious the soprano-solist's hymn is heard:

"Praise to Thee, conqueror of death
Condemned at Golgotha!
Praise to Thee, saint of sinners
Who didst die at Golgotha!
Praise to Thee, who on expiation's altar
Didst give thine life for us!
Thou hast bought us free:
We will live, we will die in Thee!"

Then the play ends with the forceful Hymn of Victory:

Hallelujah!
Praise, Honour, Worship, Power and Glory
Be Thine from Everlasting to Everlasting!

The play is ended. The large hall empties itself. The spectators disperse. Hither and thither they go. They return to their homes taking deep and lasting impressions with them. Gladly they will bear the crosses of their lives after the experience they have had here.

Pictures
of former Plays

Christ

Christus (Anton Lang)

Oberammergau 1922

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Mary

Maria (Marta Veit)
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John

Johannes (Melchior Breitsamter)

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Pilatus (Hans Mayr)

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Gang nach Jerusalem

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The Last Supper

Das Abendmahl

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Christ

Christus (Anton Lang)

Oberammergau 1910

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Mary

Maria (Ottilie Zwink)

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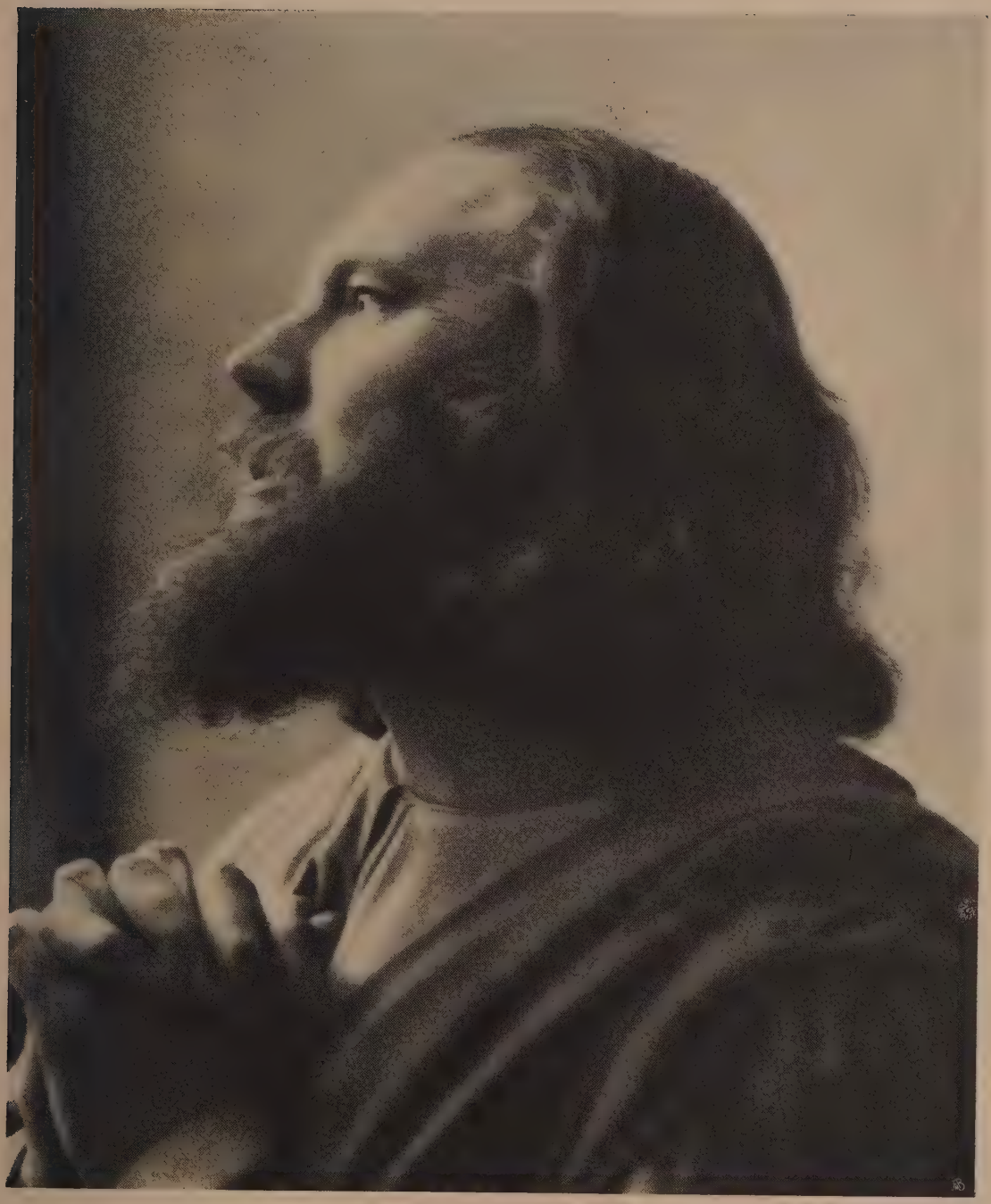

Christ — Christus (Anton Lang)

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Prologue

Der Prolog (Anton Lechner)

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Peter and John

Petrus (Andreas Lang) und
Johannes (Alfred Bierling)

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Entry into Jerusalem

Einzug in Jerusalem

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The leave taking at Bethany

Der Abschied zu Bethanien

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Judas and the traders

Judas (Johann Zwink) und die Händler

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Christ before Caiaphas

Christus vor Kaiphas

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Christ before Pilate

Christus vor Pilatus

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Pilate and the Priests

Pilatus (Sebastian Bauer) und die Priester

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The Christ and Annas before Herod

Christus und Annas (Sebastian Lang) vor Herodes (Hans Mayr)

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The crucifixion

Die Kreuzigung

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The descent of the Cross

Die Kreuzabnahme

Oberammergau 1910

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The Christ and Mary Magdalen after the resurrection

Christus und Maria Magdalena (Maria Mayr) nach der Auferstehung

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The Virgin Mary

Maria (Anna Flunger)

Oberammergau 1900

Christ

Christus (Anton Lang)

Oberammergau 1900

Caiaphas

Kaiphas (Sebastian Lang)

Oberammergau 1900

Pilate

Pilatus (Sebastian Bauer)

Oberammergau 1900

Christ taking leave of the Virgin Mary

Christi Abschied von Maria

Oberammergau 1900

The Last Supper

Das Abendmahl

Oberammergau 1900

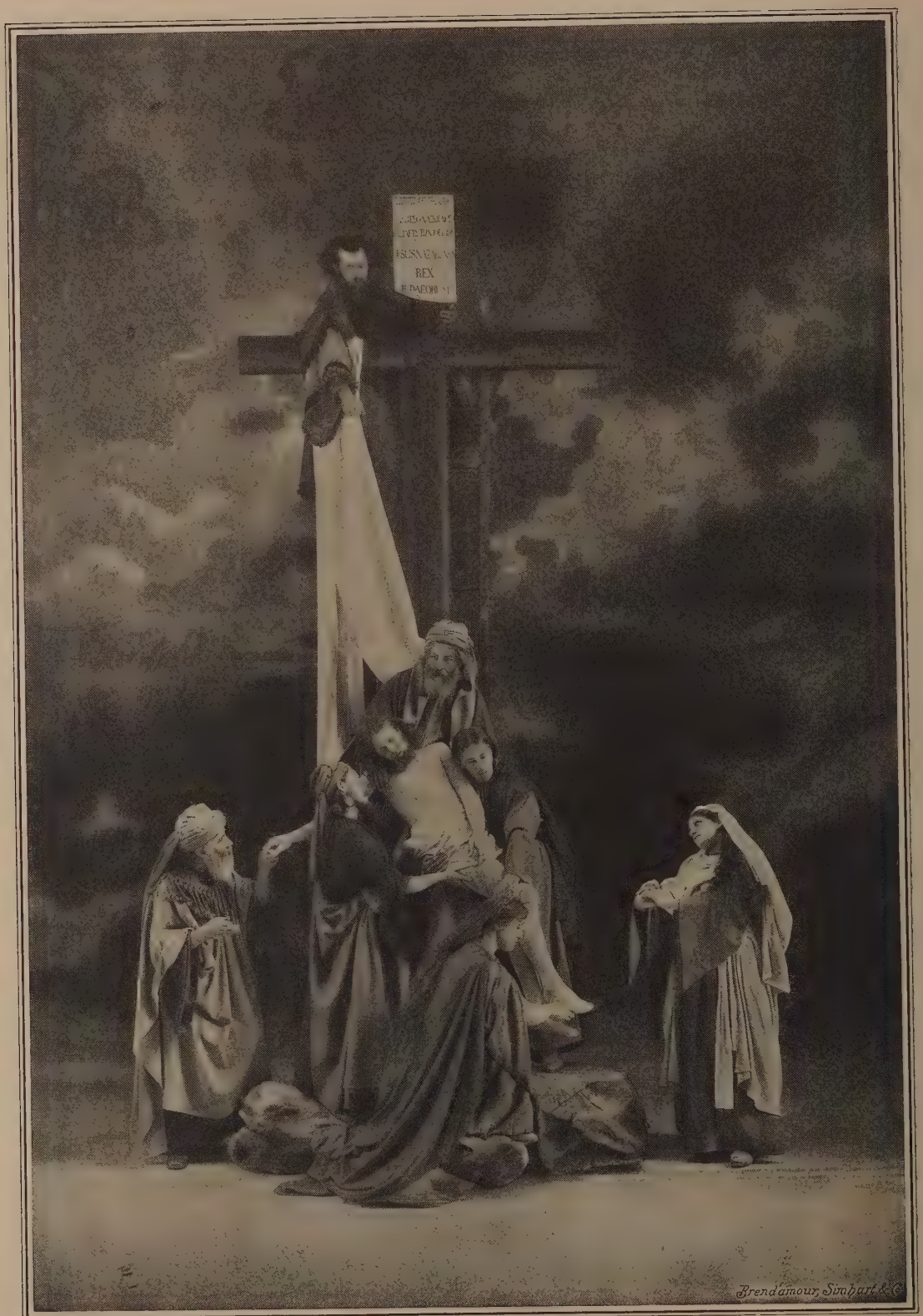
Christ before Pilate

Christus vor Pilatus

The Crucifixion

Kreuzigung

Oberammergau 1900



The Descent
from the Cross

Kreuzabnahme
Oberammergau 1900

The Burial of Christ

Grablegung Christi

Oberammergau 1900

The Resurrection

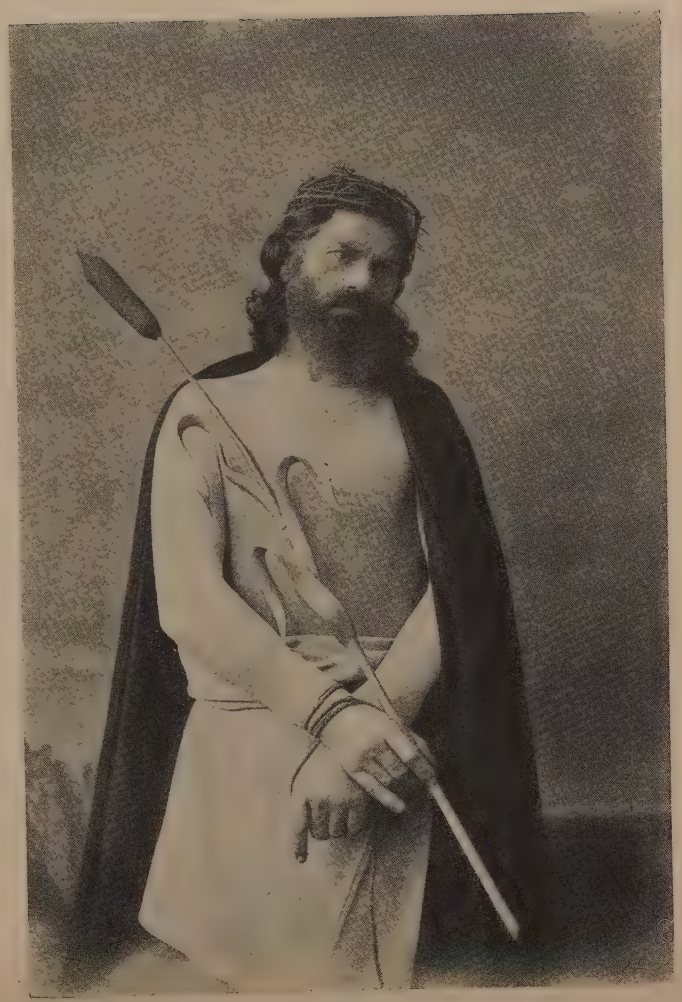
Auferstehung

Mary Magdalene

Maria Magdalena
(Berta Wolf)
Oberammergau 1900

Peter

Petrus (Thomas Rendl)
Oberammergau 1900



Joseph Mayr, Christusdarsteller von 1870, 1880 und 1890

Joseph Mayr, the Christ of 1870, 1880 and 1890

Anton Lang, Christusdarsteller von 1900, 1910 und 1922

Anton Lang, the Christ of 1900, 1910 and 1922

Ecce Homo

Jakobus James

Andreas Andrew

Matthäus Matthew

Thomas

Apostel
Disciples

Die Vertreibung aus dem Paradiese
The expulsion from the garden of Eden

Der Abschied des Tobias
The Departure of Tobias

Der Herr gibt dem Volke das Manna und die Trauben aus Kanaan
The Lord gives to the people the manna and the grapes of Canaan

Joseph wird von seinen Brüdern verkauft
Joseph sold by his brethren

Adam muß im bittern Schweiße seines Angesichtes sein Brot essen
Adam fight against life's burden

Der gefangene Samson muß den Philistern zu höhnender Kurzweil dienen
Samson avenging himself on the Philistines

Einzug und Vertreibung der Käufer (Aufnahme von 1890)

Entry into Jerusalem and Purging of the Temple (Photograph of 1890)

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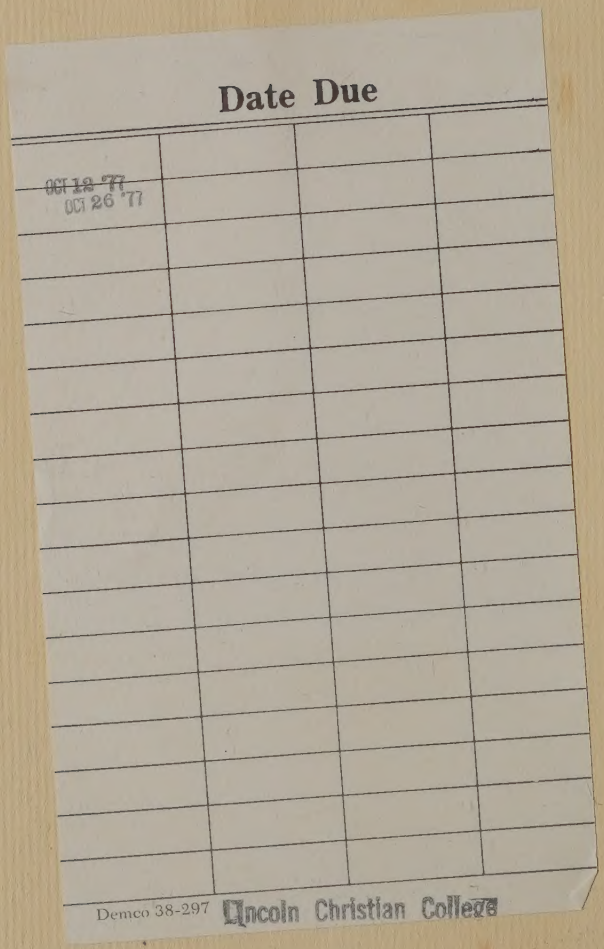
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